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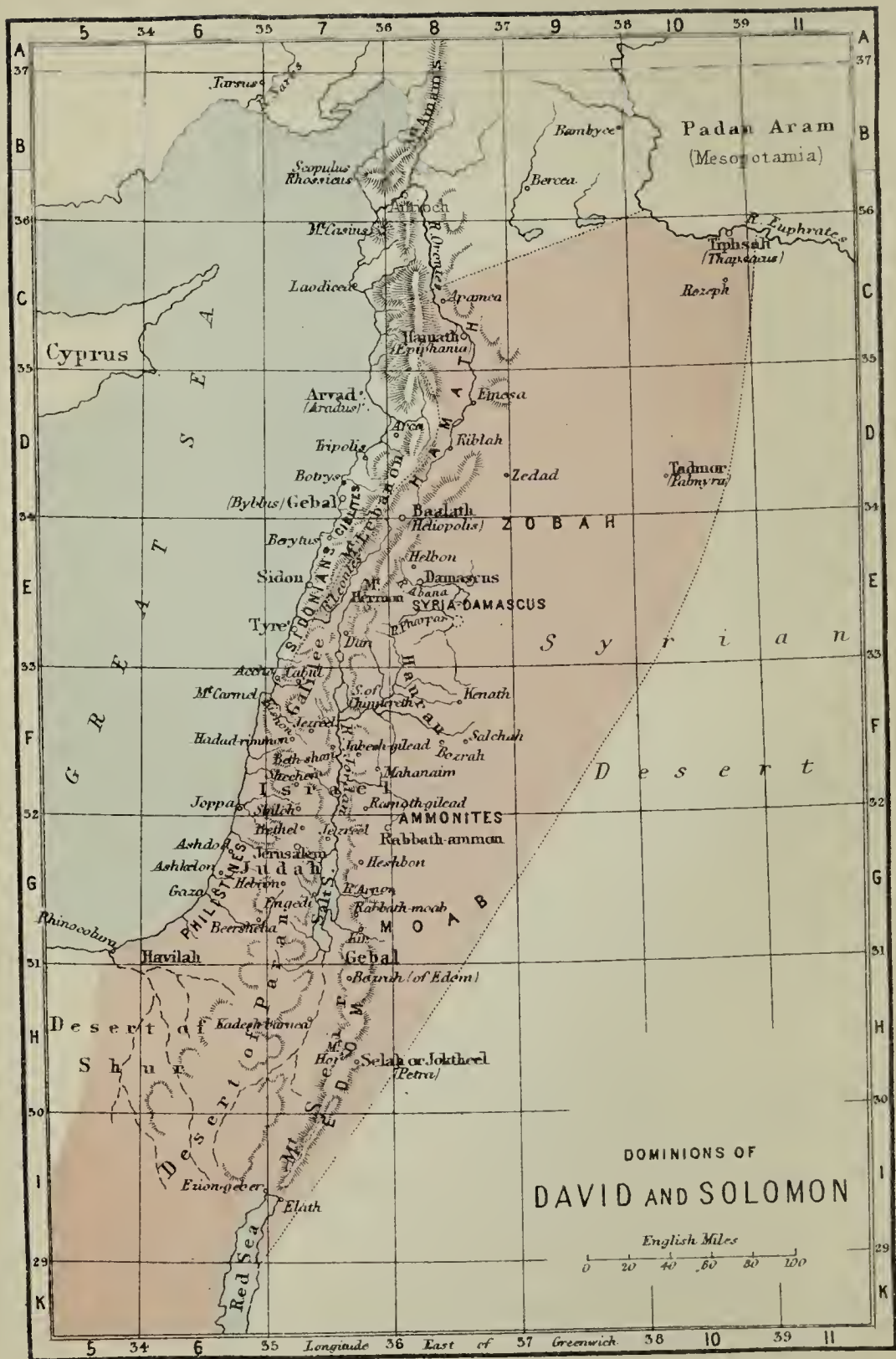
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THIS volume is the production of a young scholar of rare promise, whom it has been God's will to release from his earthly service after a brief ministry, and when on the eve of doing important literary work. As the book was left unfinished, it has been necessary to make some corrections and additions. These are only such as the lamented author doubtless would have made had he been spared. A few questions have also been appended to each chapter.—EDITOR.

NOTE TO SECOND EDITION.

ADVANTAGE has been taken of the demand for this new edition to introduce some improvements. A few phrases which have been found open to misconstruction have also been modified.—EDITOR.

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LIFE OF DAVID.

CHAPTER I.

THE SHEPHERD AND THE COURTIER.

1. BETHLEHEM. On the narrow ridge of a long grey limestone hill was perched the town of Bethlehem. It received its name "House of Bread," as well as its earlier name "Ephratah," "fruitful,"^a from the fertile corn fields in the neighbourhood. It lay but six miles S.S.W. from the stronghold of the Jebusites (afterwards called Jerusalem), and was perhaps, at the time of which we speak, as its situation fitted it to be, the equally proud and important stronghold of that portion of the tribe of Judah which had settled in the neighbourhood. Its citizens tilled the fields close by, or tended their cattle on the pasture grounds further off, retiring with all their belongings to the town on the hill-top, for mutual protection when marauding bands appeared.

2. DAVID'S BIRTH AND BOYHOOD. David was the eighth^b son of one of the citizens named Jesse (Hebrew, *Yishai*), who seems, from the contemptuous way in which David is sometimes called "son of Jesse,"^c and from the fact that he did not rank among the "elders" of the town,^d to have

^a Gen. xlviii. 7. Micah v. 2.

^b 1 Sam. xvi. 10, 11. 1 Chron. ii. 15, "seventh," one being omitted perhaps as having no son and thus no place in the genealogy.—ED.

^c 1 Sam. xx. 30. 2 Sam. xx. 1. 1 Kings xii. 16.

^d 1 Sam. xvi. 4; see also 1 Sam. xviii. 23.

been in comparatively poor circumstances.^a "Red-haired (rare in the East, and thought beautiful), with beautiful eyes, and fair of face"^b is the only information regarding his personal appearance that is ever given us: and perhaps it was because the boy pleased his parents, and they augured a happy future for one so handsome, that they called him *David*, i.e., "beloved," expressing thus a hope which events fully justified. At a time when book-learning was confined to the schools of the prophets and to the priestly families, the "education" of a boy meant teaching him to earn his bread, and Jesse's youngest son must have been early sent out to find grazing for his father's sheep^c on the pastures claimed as their common property by the Bethlehemites. On the rugged uplands of Judah he was schooled by Nature herself to manly hardihood and endurance, and as he grew up showed great fearlessness of mind, as well as robust strength of body. As for literature and religion, his education in these subjects would consist in hearing, first at the mother's knee, and then in the family gatherings, the recital of the traditional history of the patriarchs of the nation, varied perhaps with listening to the legal instructions of a Levite or priest at the yearly festival. And as he day by day led forth his sheep, and beguiled his time with the shepherd's flute or guitar, the whole varied page of nature lay open before him to enforce and vivify the knowledge of God which these histories gave, and right eagerly must his young poetic soul have drunk her teachings in.

3. KILLING A LION AND A BEAR. Only one slight glimpse of David's life at this period is given us, but it suffices to show what stern work a shepherd had then to do. The country about Bethlehem, being very hilly, and hence but thinly peopled, had

^a Among his ancestors, however, is named Nahshon, prince of the children of Judah, 1 Chr. ii. 10.—ED.

^b 1 Sam. xvi. 12; xvii. 42. Heb.

^c 1 Sam. xvi. 11.

not yet been cleared of wild beasts, and David's first recorded exploits were single-handed encounters with these enemies of the flock. The desert Arabs to this day, as some travellers allege, are not afraid to face the lion with only a club in their hands, and David, with justifiable pride, claims to have slain not only a lion, but even the shaggy and ferocious bear, which was more dreaded,^a in the act of carrying off lambs. Nor was the victory one of stratagem over brute force, but of downright strength and courage, for he gave the beasts battle face to face, took them by the throat, and beat them to death with his club.

4. ANOINTED BY SAMUEL (1 Sam. xvi. 1-13). Israel had but recently begun to unite her scattered tribes into a national unity under one king. And Saul had not been many years on the throne, when the old prophet, who, by God's direction, chose and appointed him, watching his behaviour, perceived that his conduct was guided more by selfish and worldly policy than by strict uprightness and stern loyalty to Jehovah. A word of Jehovah was not holy to him above all other advice :^b he could prefer the acquisition of a rich booty to unswerving obedience to conscience. Samuel saw at once that the divine kingdom could not proceed on these lines—that this could not be the divinely-chosen king. By-and-bye the mysterious call of Jehovah sent him to Bethlehem^c with the certainty of finding among Jesse's sons the king after Jehovah's own heart. The aged judge went thither as he was bid, causing the elders of the town no small alarm at first. He took a special sacrifice as the apparent occasion for his visit, called the elders and Jesse's family to the sacrificial meal, and keenly scanned the faces of Jesse's sons as they entered one after the other. At first Eliab, the eldest, pleased him, but the Divine voice soon rejected him, and all the other six. On

^a Note that David mentions first the lion, then the bear.

^b 1 Sam. xv.

^c 1 Sam. xvi. 1.

David being sent for, however, Samuel, instructed by the Lord, at once recognised him as the chosen one, and poured on him the anointing oil. Yet he seems to have said no word to interpret his act.^a At least neither David himself nor his brothers and fellow-citizens, for a long time, betrayed any consciousness of his right to the throne. The red-haired, bright-eyed youth went back to his sheep ; the prophet had been at his mysteries : who could pretend to understand him ? Only it was noted that the behaviour of David from that time gained in genius, and in power of all kinds, secular and religious,^b—gained in all the marks of true godlike character, while Saul as conspicuously retrograded and declined. The Spirit of the Lord came upon the one, and departed from the other.

5. DAVID INTRODUCED TO SAUL (1 Sam. xvi. 19-23).^c As the bright promise of his early life faded away, Saul's downward career was marked by strange fits of melancholy dejection and ill-temper ; and his ministers, knowing the soothing effects of music in such nervous states, recommended David to him as a skilful player on the harp [rather "guitar"]. David came to the court, instructed by his father, with a present for the king,^d and his playing, learnt on the fields while watching his flock, soon had the desired effect. Saul came to "love him greatly" in a short time, demanded leave of his father to keep him in permanent residence at the court, and gave him the highly honourable position of royal armour-bearer.

6. PHILISTINE WAR : GOLIATH SLAIN (1 Sam. xvii.). The ever-smouldering feud between Israel and the Philistines of the coast had blazed out with unwonted brightness through the enemy having obtained, as their champion, a man of Gath, of gigantic stature, named Goliath. He is reported, if the modern de-

^a In xvi. 10, "unto Jesse" should be left out.

^b 1 Sam. xvi. 13.

^c 1 Sam. xvi. 14-23.

^d 1 Sam. xvi. 20, read "a skin of wine" for "a bottle of wine."

^e The name means "captivity:" was he perhaps the son of some

termination of the Hebrew cubit can be relied on, to have been little less than 10 feet high,^a and he was protected by a complete suit of heavy bronze mail. His weapons of offence were of iron, and corresponded to his own gigantic size. The two armies encamped over against each other, on the opposite ridges that hung over a valley called the Valley of the Terebinth (Elah), which has been identified with the modern *Wady es-Sunt* (Valley of the Acacia), about sixteen or eighteen miles from Bethlehem. The battles in early times, as those sung by Homer, being mostly a number of single combats between individuals, as the battles of the Arabs were before Mohammed, this giant boldly challenged the whole Israelite host to find a foeman who would dare to face him. Saul offered large rewards, including the hand of his own daughter, to any one who should slay him; but for forty days no one was bold enough to try the fortune of war with him. David's three eldest brothers were in the army, his father being now too old for military service, and he himself having, apparently, returned to his labours as a shepherd. Being sent, however, with supplies of food for his brothers, and to bring news of them,^b he heard the Philistine's challenge, and at once volunteered to meet him. Saul at first equipped him in his own heavy armour, but this only hindered and clogged his movements, and he preferred to attack the giant, in the name of the Lord of hosts, with his shepherd's weapons, a staff^c and a sling. His stone, discharged with well-trained aim, sunk into the Philistine's forehead, and stunned him. David then ran forward and slew him with his own

foreigner captured in war, and naturalised in Gath? Compare *Gershon*, Exod. ii. 22.

^a *Lushkin*, "the Russian giant," the tallest man in modern times, measured 8 feet 5 inches, only 17 inches less.

^b Ver. 18, "Take their pledge," the equivalent, in the absence of a written letter, of bringing news of their safety. Ver. 22, for "carriage," read "baggage."

^c 1 Samuel xvii. 43.

sword, cutting off his head to carry to Bethlehem or Gibeah^a as a trophy, and stripping him of his heavy armour. The Israelites soon recovered their courage, and pursued the dismayed Philistines with great slaughter, quite to the gates of Gath and Ekron,^b the nearest of their fenced cities. Saul did not at first recognise David, nor did Abner his general, but when he was introduced, Saul took him to the court, and a close friendship sprung up between David and Jonathan, Saul's son (xvii. 55—xviii. 5).^c Jonathan seems even to have recognised that David's superior prowess gave him the best right to the kingdom, for he clothed David in his own princely robes and armour, and that could hardly have any other meaning than such a symbolical abdication in his favour.

7. SAUL'S JEALOUSY OF DAVID (1 Sam. xviii. 6-16). After spoiling the Philistine camp, the Israelite army marched homewards. On the way they were met, according to custom, by large numbers of the women, who streamed forth from all the towns to greet the victors and celebrate the triumph with music and dancing. Justly considering that the slaughter of the giant was the grand feat of the day, and equal in importance to the slaughter of any number of other warriors, they had extemporised a short chorus,—

a Jerusalem in ver. 54 is clearly a slip of the pen in some later writer, who remembered that Jerusalem was afterwards the capital.

b In ver. 52, for "by the way to Shaaraim," the correct translation is, "in the way of the two gates," *i.e.*, the folding gates of each city; and for "the valley" read "Gath."

c We have narrated these events as they stand in Scripture, but it is to be noted that xvii. 12-31 and 55—xviii. 5, are wanting in the Greek version called the Septuagint, which is practically our oldest manuscript of the O. T. and hence most scholars now consider these passages late insertions. If this view be adopted, most of the difficulties of the above narrative disappear. For instance, the difficulties of Saul's not recognising his own armour-bearer, whom he "loved greatly," and still more of Abner's failing to recognise him, and also of David's return to his shepherd duties on the outbreak of the war, are all thus got rid of. Moreover, chap. xviii. 17 evidently knows nothing of David's having already earned the hand of Saul's daughter for that reward is promised anew on condition of further warlike exertions.

King Saul has laid his thousands low,
And David his ten thousands !

in which the highest praise was given to David. This deeply offended Saul : he had won the throne by his warlike abilities (1 Sam. xi.), and he could not bear to think that his armour-bearer had eclipsed him. In an age when royalty stood by personal worth, not by prescription of descent, it suggested that the stripling would supplant him in the royal dignity next. Soon his jealousy and ill-temper rose to the height of frenzy,^a and when David attempted, as before, to soothe him with the guitar, he utterly failed, and Saul suddenly flung at him the javelin, which he carried as a sceptre,^b with intent to slay him. David, however, managed cleverly to shun the missile. Saul, then, becoming more afraid of David than ever, dismissed him from the court, appointing him captain of a thousand in the army. In this position David "prospered exceedingly,"^c doubtless in carrying on the never-ending Philistine war, and gained the love of the whole nation more and more.

8. SAUL SEEKS HIS DEATH BY STRATAGEM (1 Sam. xviii. 17-30). Saul's next attempt against David was a most mean device—an attempt to play on his warlike courage, and make it lead to his ruin. He promised him the hand of his eldest daughter Merab, if he should distinguish himself in the Philistine war, hoping that the young soldier would thus be tempted to acts of extreme daring, which would cost him his life. When Merab reached marriageable age, however, the promise was forgotten, and she was given to a man of Abel-meholah, otherwise quite unknown to history.^d But the de-

^a Ver. 10, for "he prophesied," read "became frenzied."

^b See 1 Samuel xxii. 6.

^c Vers. 14, 15 Hebrew, for "behaved wisely."

^d This narrative is so far doubtful, as vers. 17-19, and the second half of ver. 21, are wanting in the LXX.

vice was continued. Saul discovered that his daughter Michal had fallen in love with David, and, with the same intent as before, made his principal ministers urge David to sue for her hand. But in ancient times a would-be son-in-law had practically to buy his wife from her father, and the higher the father's rank, of course the greater would be the price required for his daughter. Accordingly, David replied that the poverty and obscurity of his family made it quite impossible for him to provide a sufficient "dowry" for a princess. On being informed, however, that Saul demanded only evidence of the death of one hundred Philistines, he gladly accepted the offer, went out with his men, and soon returned to claim his bride, with proof that he had slain the stipulated number of Philistines.^a Much to Saul's chagrin, he had passed safely through the fiery ordeal. These deep-laid plots had only made David more admired and beloved by the people, and more dreaded and envied than ever by the jealous king.

9. DAVID FLEES TO SAMUEL AT RAMAH (1 Sam. xix.) Saul could no longer conceal his deadly hatred, but indicated to those about him his wish to have David killed. Against such open hostility David's only resource was in flight; but Jonathan, his friend, was loth to lose his company, and loth to think so ill of his father as his words seemed to demand. He therefore concealed David in a field near Gibeah, and then found means to entice Saul into a conversation regarding David, near the very spot where he lay hid, so that he might hear Saul's unrestrained expressions, and find out what was his real mind. He then pleaded David's merits and services so eloquently that Saul became appeased, and gave Jonathan an oath that he would no more seek David's death. David was then brought back to his

^a For the "two hundred" in 1 Sam. xviii. 27, the Septuagint version reads "one hundred." It is "one hundred," also, in 2 Samuel iii. 14.—ED.

former position at Court, and for a time all was peaceful. But a Philistine war soon brought him new laurels, and Saul new rage, and the king once more tried to transfix him with the javelin, as he played before him on the guitar, during a fit of melancholy. David slipped out of the way of the missile, and escaped to his own house. That night Saul determined to use his royal power, and once for all rid himself of David. Owing to a popular superstition as to the inviolable character of a family home by night,^a he did not dare to enter his house then, but sent soldiers to watch it, and arrest him in the morning. The watchers were noticed by his wife Michal, who at once divined their intentions, and she let her husband down by a window on the other side of the house. In the morning she had laid a wooden image, a household idol or charm, in his bed, and covered it, head and all, with a counterpane^b of goats' hair. When Saul's emissaries entered, she pointed to the bed, and said David was too sick to rise and go with them. The trick was found out when Saul sent them back with orders to carry David to the palace in his bed, if he was unable to walk, but meanwhile David had gained time to escape. He had fled to Samuel to Ramah [now *er-Ram*] on a height about three miles west of Gibeah, where Saul lived. Having told Samuel all that had happened, he was received by him into the *Naioth* or Home of the prophetic school at Ramah. When it became known that he was there, Saul again sent soldiers to arrest him, but three several bands were, one after the other, so carried away by religious enthusiasm from hearing the exercises of Samuel's pupils, that they could not help joining the prophets, and forgot their message. Even Saul himself, on crossing the valley between the two towns,

^a See Judges xvi. 2.

^b Or quilt, not "pillow" in vers. 13-16. Some think the word means "a fly-net."

shared the same fate, falling down and lying naked for a day and a night in an ecstasy of inward emotion. This event gave rise to a common Israelite by-word for something totally incongruous and out of place: "Is Saul even among the prophets?"

[Psalm xi. was most likely composed about this time, and should be read in connection with this portion of the history.]

10. JONATHAN'S LAST EFFORT WITH SAUL (1 Sam. xx.) David soon found that Samuel could afford him no effectual protection; his only remaining hope was in Jonathan's intercession. He therefore paid a secret visit to Jonathan, and the two made a solemn "covenant of Jehovah" together, binding themselves to eternal friendship and mutual help, this duty to extend, after the death of either, to their descendants. It was then arranged that Jonathan should make one last effort to see whether his father's hatred was fixed and implacable. On the morrow, which would be the day of the new moon, a high festival, David was to absent himself from the royal table,^a and if the king should make any remark, Jonathan was to pretend that David had gone to Bethlehem to attend a family sacrifice on the day of the new moon, and thus draw Saul into a conversation about David, in which his real intentions might be discovered. Meanwhile David would keep in concealment, and come at a set time to "yon heap of stones,"^b where he had once already hid himself (see chap. xix. 2), to obtain news of the result of the experiment. Thither Jonathan would come, and in case an interview should be found impossible, would give David the desired information by a sign.

^a This seems to imply that it was still David's wont to appear there, because his absence was to be the occasion of starting Saul in conversation about him, and thus once more sounding his real mind. How this is to be reconciled with the narrative in chap. xix. of David's flight to Ramah, is matter of conjecture only. The exact order of these events is evidently unknown.

^b Ver. 19. So read for "the stone Ezel."

He would shoot arrows apparently at the heap of stones as a mark, but would make them either fall short of it, or go wide beyond it, and thus indicate whether David were to come back to his home, or must go further off for safety. The first day of David's absence Saul said nothing, thinking that some accidental ceremonial defilement had kept him from the royal table, where the meal would be a sacrificial one on this festival day. Next day, however, when David's seat was again empty, he asked Jonathan about him, and on receiving the reply agreed on, broke out into most bitter and violent insults of Jonathan for befriending David, and actually flung his javelin-sceptre to slay him too. Jonathan, in high wrath, left the table without tasting food, and went at once to the heap of stones, where he could only bid David find his safety in flight. Finding that no one was near, the two friends were able to meet, and after an affectionate interview, and mutual encouragements, took farewell of each other, and David made all haste to get far away from Gibeah.

QUESTIONS AND POINTS FOR INQUIRY.

*What kind of education had Hebrew boys in David's time?
How were battles conducted then?*

How were marriages contracted, and what was meant by dowry?

What were the circumstances of David's first connection with Saul? What caused Saul's enmity to David, and on what occasions did the former seek the life of the latter?

State the position of Ramah, Gibeah, Gath, Ephratah, and what made each remarkable?

Ascertain the manner of life of the Hebrew peasantry in David's days.

Trace his ancestry.

CHAPTER II.

THE FUGITIVE AND OUTLAW CHIEF.

11. DAVID AT NOB. (1 Sam. xxi. 1-9). The first stage in David's flight was a march of about five miles S.W. from Gibeah to Nob, which lay on the ridge north of Jerusalem, and within sight of it.^a It seems to have been at this time the chief sanctuary of the Israelites, although the ark of the covenant was not there, but at Kirjathjearim. David wanted to "enquire of the Lord"^b regarding the success of his journey, and also to obtain some food and arms if possible. On reaching the sanctuary he addressed himself to Ahimelech, the head of the priestly community, and pretended to have been sent by the king on a mission of immediate urgency, and accounted for his being without attendants by saying that they had been appointed to meet him at a certain place, whilst he came alone to consult the oracle as to this mission. Ahimelech seems then to have given him a favourable oracle for his journey, which he supposed to be some royal mission, and after ascertaining that he and his men would be at least ceremonially clean, gave him of the sacred "shew-bread," the only kind of bread he then happened to have. As for arms, he had none to offer, save Goliath's sword, hung up before the Lord by David himself as a trophy. David took it, and bade the priest adieu.

12. HE SEEKS REFUGE IN GATH (1 Sam. xxi. 10-15.) Driven from Israel as he was, David's first thought was to offer his services to Achish, the king of the Philistine province of Gath,^c who of course lived in permanent feud with Israel. He no doubt supposed that Achish would gladly welcome a

^a See Isa. x. 32.

^b Chap. xxii. 10.

^c The site of the city is uncertain

deserter whose talent in warfare was so conspicuous. In this hope he seems not to have been disappointed so far as the king was concerned, but the courtiers and people soon began to murmur against the friendly reception of the conqueror of their country, and active preparations for his death or imprisonment seem to have been commenced. David could save himself only by feigning madness, thumping on the gates of the city as if they were drums,^a and letting his spittle fall on his beard, and the like. On seeing this behaviour, Achish remarked that he had fools enough in his service already, and dismissed David as useless and imbecile, and he was once more free and homeless.

13. IN THE STRONGHOLD OF ADULLAM (1 Sam. xxii. 1-4. 1 Chron. xii. 8-18.) He now betook himself to the cave or hillfort^b of Adullam, still shown about six miles S.W. from Bethlehem, but apparently not reckoned to belong to Judah at this time.^c Here he was joined by his brethren and relatives from the neighbouring Bethlehem, while he was able to find an asylum for his aged parents at Mizpeh, in Moab. When his purpose of defying Saul's authority and living an outlaw's life became known, he was soon joined by all who were discontented with their position or fugitives from court, and in a short time had four hundred men under his command. The names of several from the tribe of Gad, beyond Jordan, who were celebrated for their swiftness of foot and their fearless courage in battle, have been preserved to us^d. They afterwards became captains in David's army. Sometimes, indeed, the new comers

^a This is to be read for "scrabbled" in ver. 13.

^b Called "cave" ver. 1, "hold" vers. 4, 5; and similarly 2 Sam. xxiii. 13, 14. The two words are very similar in Hebrew, and "cave" is probably mis-copied for "hold" in both cases.

^c See ver. 5. The *town* of Adullam lay on the Philistine border, far west of this, and many think the fortress referred to was near the town.

^d See 1 Chron. xii. 8-13.

seem to have given him trouble by double-dealing, for when a troop of Benjamites, from Saul's own tribe, came to the hold, under the leadership of one Amasai, David suspected treachery, and adjured them to tell him whether their intentions towards him were upright or not. The answer was so cordial as to allay all his fears: they at once swore allegiance to David, and joined the band.

14. WATER FROM THE WELL OF BETH-LEHEM (2 Sam. xxiii. 13-17.) Only one incident of this period has been preserved to us, but it shows both the enthusiasm and passionate love with which David was regarded by his men, and the helpless state of Saul's government at this time. The royal army had now lost the one captain who could keep the Philistines in check, and they streamed all over the country in marauding bands, the head-quarters being for the time in the valley of Rephaim, near Jerusalem, and an out-post beleaguering Bethlehem. In one of those moments of fond recollection of a brighter past that come over men, David cried out for a draft of the well of Bethlehem, by the gate, whither doubtless he had often driven his sheep in his youth. At once three of his men started off without his knowledge, forced a passage through the Philistine lines, and brought him the water. David, however, with genuine modesty, refused to allow men to hazard their lives for his own personal gratification merely, and poured out the water "before Jehovah," as a sacrificial libation; for it was as good as blood, said he. The three men who did this deed were justly reckoned ever afterwards as the mightiest of all David's heroes.

After some time the fortress of Adullam became unsafe, for what reason we know not, and the prophet Gad advised David to leave it and enter the territory of Judah. The band of outlaws then moved to the forest of Hareth.

15. MASSACRE OF THE PRIESTS BY SAUL

(1 Sam. xxii. 6-23). David's friendly reception by Ahimelech at Nob had been witnessed by an Edomite named Doeg, one of Saul's household officials, who was then "detained before the Lord," most likely to be observed by the priests for suspected leprosy,^a and he now took the opportunity of currying favour with Saul by reporting this matter to him. Saul's rage, baffled as yet in its pursuit of David, broke out against the unoffending priests. He at once gave orders for the massacre of the entire family at Nob, a piece of sacrilege which must have lowered him infinitely in public estimation, for even his guards promptly declined to execute such an order. Doeg, however, had no such scruples, and on Saul applying to him, he butchered in cold blood eighty-five persons of priestly lineage, and laid waste and spoiled the town. The only priest who managed to escape was Abiathar, Ahimelech's son, who came to David with the sorrowful tale. David gave him a cordial welcome, and promised him protection, and Abiathar followed his fortunes thenceforth.

16. THE RELIEF OF KEILAH (1 Sam. xxiii. 1-14). It was now the end of harvest-time, in the month of May, and news was brought to David that the town of Keilah, which lay near the western frontier, was being harassed by marauding bands of Philistines. As the town seems not to have belonged to Judah at this time,^b Saul did not move a finger to protect it. The enemy had shut up the citizens within their walls, and were robbing the loaded threshing-floors outside. David, having now a priest with an ephod in his camp, enquired of God, by means of the priestly lot, through Abiathar, whether he might successfully attack them. His men were somewhat afraid of the enterprise, but the oracle twice decided

^a Levit. xiii. 4, 21.

^b See ver. 3. It was perhaps, like Jerusalem, held by some tribe of protected Canaanites.

in favour of it, and the little band marched across the highlands of Judah, surprised and defeated the Philistines with great loss, and took much booty. He then established himself for a time in the town. But when Saul heard that he was remaining there, he called out a full levy of all Israel and prepared to besiege him in the town, rejoicing that the prey was in his clutches at last, for the capture of four hundred men in a fortress, however strong, could only be for his large army a question of time. His intention and preparations became known to David, and being warned by the priestly oracle that the citizens of Keilah would be compelled, for their own safety, to give him up to Saul, he left the town, and betook himself once more to strongholds in the "hill-country" of Judah, this time in the district of Ziph [now *Tell Zif*], three miles S.E. of Hebron.

17. JONATHAN'S VISIT (1 Sam. xxiii. 15-18). While encamped here in a forest, David received a clandestine visit from Jonathan, which greatly strengthened his failing spirits. Saul's emissaries now were constantly on the outlook for him, and the constant tension of mind caused thereby had begun to exhaust David's ^a courage. Jonathan, however, recognised that God had already fully marked out David for the throne of Israel, and expressed his confidence that his father's enmity would not be able to harm him. For himself he desired only to be next in honour to David, though he was older, and Saul's son. The two friends renewed their covenant "before the Lord,"—that is, with solemn sacrifices,—and parted, never, so far as we know, to meet in life again.

18. THE ZIPHITES REPORT DAVID; A NARROW ESCAPE (1 Sam. xxiii. 19-29.) David's band had no means of livelihood save freebooting, and the rewards they might receive from the wealthy sheepowners for acting as police of the district, to

^a Ver. 15, read "And David feared because Saul was come, &c."

ward off the incursions of the roving nomad tribes from the South. Hence the inhabitants of the district of Ziph soon felt their presence a severe tax upon them, and reported to Saul that David was hiding somewhere in their neighbourhood, though they could not tell the exact spot. Saul thanked them much for the information, promised to come at once to their relief, and dismissed them to seek out his haunts more exactly. By the time Saul came, they appear to have been able to direct him to David's whereabouts. He had now established himself on an inaccessible crag in the district of Maon [now *Main*], seven miles south of Ziph. So stealthy was Saul's approach that his men were surrounding the base of the hill on which this rock stood, before David's spies were aware of their presence. David's little band at once made haste to escape by one side of the hill where the circle was not yet completed. They were in imminent danger, however, and hence it was like a miraculous deliverance to them when news of a Philistine raid came to Saul, and he was compelled to withdraw his army to meet them. From this event the rock was named by David's men "Rock of slippery places"^a from the extreme danger in which they then were.

19. DAVID AT ENGEDI GENEROUSLY SPARES SAUL'S LIFE: A RECONCILIATION (1 Sam. xxiv.). The next resort of the outlaws was to the wild crags and deep ravines overhanging the beautiful and richly verdant oasis of Engedi (Wild Goat's Well) on the W. shore of the Dead Sea, nearly opposite Hebron. This was a range of bleak rocks tenanted only by the fleet chamois or wild goats, and eminently defensible. Hither he was followed, after the conclusion of the Philistine raid, by Saul with 3000 chosen men. During the search it happened that

^a Or perhaps, "Rock of Destiny," for the word might possibly mean that, from the interference of God to save them.

the very cave in whose recesses the banditti were concealed for the time was chosen by Saul for his mid-day rest. He apparently entered the cave alone, and his life being thus quite at their mercy, David's men urged that this was as good as a command from the Lord to slay Saul. David, however, recognised that it was not his part to punish Saul's crimes. His divine appointment to the throne carried with it responsibility to God alone, and though David had the right of self-defence against unjust persecution, yet such self-defence did not imperatively demand Saul's death. He therefore restrained the vehemence of his followers, and contented himself with cutting off the lower fringe of Saul's long upper robe while he slept, as a proof that he had been near him and might have slain him, had he so chosen. When Saul left the cave, David went out also and, making himself known to the king, pointed to the fringe of the robe in his hand, and asked if his sparing Saul when he might have slain him did not prove sufficiently that he had no designs on Saul's life, whatever evil-disposed people might have told Saul? The king was thoroughly overcome by this demonstration of so unmerited generosity, confessed his fault, acknowledged that he knew David to be ordained of God to the kingdom, and begged for an assurance that, on his accession, he would not exterminate Saul's descendants, an assurance which David gladly gave. The old king then returned home for a time, and David once more betook himself to the crag in Maon.^a

20. LEVYING CONTRIBUTIONS (1 Sam. xxv. 2-44). Much light is thrown on David's manner of life about this time by the incident that now follows. It is clear from the case of Keilah that Saul's authority was quite insufficient for the protection of life and property at any distance from Gibeah.

^a This must be read in ch. xxv. 1, with LXX., for "Paran."

Hence it was that David and his 600 men were able to maintain themselves by contributions from the district. For the same reason, the whole south of Judah would be exposed to the plundering raids of the Amalekites and other wilderness tribes. It seems probable that David protected his friends against these raids, and that this was part of the work done by his band. From those who received such protection they expected, and were entitled to expect, some reward in the form of a voluntary contribution. In this way David had protected the large herds of a wealthy Maonite named Nabal ("fool"), as they fed on Carmel,^a near David's camp. Accordingly when the festivities of the annual shearing time came round David sent ten of his men to greet Nabal in the most friendly way,^b and to request some share of the superfluities of the feast. But Nabal with the short-sighted vanity of inherited wealth, refused the request, and added some silly taunts about David's being "low-born," and a "runaway slave." On hearing this insulting reply, David was enraged, swore to wreak a terrible vengeance, and started to execute it with 400 men, leaving 200 in the camp. One of Nabal's servants, however, had overheard his master's insolent words, and knew the peril into which his churlishness had brought them all. He therefore informed Abigail, Nabal's wife, of the occurrence, and advised her to do, on her own account, what she could to save their lives. Without consulting her husband, she at once collected a suitable present of all kinds of provisions, packed it on asses, and sent it on to meet David while she followed in person. They met on the slope of the hill, and Abigail, in a most skilful speech, succeeded in persuading the enraged chief to give up his purpose of blood. She urged that Nabal was, according

^a Slightly N. of Maon, now *Kürmül*.

^b In v. 6. for "To him that liveth *in prosperity*," read "to my brother."

to his name, such a fool as to be quite beneath David's attention even to punish; that a warrior like him, who fought the battles of Jehovah, would never regret having exercised mercy; and that by her coming Jehovah had mercifully come between him and blood-guiltiness. Although Saul was seeking his life, yet she assured him that all were certain that God destined him for the crown, and would preserve and protect him. David was at once appeased, thanked her and thanked God for having stopped him in his vengeful purpose, and returned to his camp. When Abigail reached home again, she found her husband too drunk to be spoken to: but in the morning she informed him of all that had happened. Chagrin at his humiliation and rage threw him at once into a fit, most likely of apoplexy, from which he never recovered. Ten days later a second shock came on, and he died. On hearing of his death, David, whose wife Michal had been given to another husband, (no doubt some one whom her father had wished to attach to the fortunes of his house), sought and obtained the hand of the wealthy widow. He had also married before this a certain Ahinoam belonging to the small town of Jezreel, in the same neighbourhood.^a

21. DAVID SPARES SAUL'S LIFE AGAIN. (1 Sam. xxvi.) The Ziphites once more reported that David was in hiding in the mountain range of Hachilah, and Saul, whose mind was constant only to evil, was easily roused to a renewed pursuit. And, strange to say, the story of David's generous sparing of his foe, and temporary reconciliation with him, renewed itself also. David's scouts found out where Saul was encamped, and the following night, he and his sister Zeruiah's son,^b Abishai, cautiously approached the camp, and found the whole host asleep in careless security. Abishai begged per-

^a Joshua xv. 56.

^b 1 Chron. ii. 16.

mission to end their toils by slaying Saul with the spear stuck upright at his head as a symbol of royalty, but David refused for the same reasons as before in the cave. He simply carried off Saul's spear and a cruse of water that was also standing by his pillow, and retiring to the top of a neighbouring hill at a safe distance, called loudly till he awoke Abner, the general of the army. He then pointed out that the spear and cruse of water were missing, and accused Abner of criminal neglect to defend his royal master. Saul recognised David by his voice, and then David complained to him of this unmerited persecution, and urged that his banishment from society was as good as a command to go and serve other gods. If God had, for some sin, stirred up Saul to this crime, let him expiate his sin by sacrifice; but if men were his traducers, let them be cursed before Jehovah. Saul once more was smitten with shame that he should have been seeking the life of one who had so generously respected his life, and returned home, vowing no more to do him harm, and predicting David's elevation and success.^a

QUESTIONS AND POINTS FOR INQUIRY.

Recount the different stages in David's outlaw life, and his various meetings with Jonathan.

How did David obtain means of support for himself and his men at this time?

What made Abiathar and David intimate friends?

How did David seek to ascertain the Divine will?

Sketch the character of Doeg.

State the position and importance of Nob and Keilah.

Explain the ancient oriental ideas about idiots.

^a This narrative is so similar to that of ch. xxiv., and yet all allusions to the previous event are so entirely absent that many think the two are duplicate narratives of one event, the details of which had become different in the popular tradition. Yet it is by no means impossible that David should have twice spared his foe; and it is quite in accordance with Saul's character that his repentance should have been but temporary.

CHAPTER III.

THE PHILISTINE VASSAL AT ZIKLAG.

22. DAVID TAKES POSSESSION OF ZIKLAG AS PHILISTINE VASSAL (1 Sam. xxvii). Weary of living from day to day in constant dread of a surprise, David again thought of the Philistine country as a more secure refuge. Achish the king, too, and the whole people, had by this time learned that David had thoroughly broken with Saul, and his warlike talents were now only too well known. He therefore gave David a most cordial welcome, and the whole band, with their wives and children, removed to Gath. Soon after, at David's request, the city of Ziklag in the far south [site unknown] was assigned to them as their home. Here David lived as a semi-independent chieftain, very much in the feudal fashion, ruling his own band as he listed, without appeal, and holding his land from the Philistine king on condition of paying tribute,^a and giving military service when required.^b His men still lived, all the same, not by agriculture or by trade, but by freebooting. They employed themselves in making constant raids upon the Amalekites and and other nomad tribes on the south of Judah, by which, when successful, they gained much spoil. The only justification for this style of welfare, was the national hatred of these desert tribes, consequent on their predatory and unsettled habits. But David's raids were characterised by extreme cruelty, for which even the rough customs of the time hardly furnished any excuse,^c and which contrasts most violently with his generosity in respect to Saul. He was wont to slay even the women and children of those upon whom he fell, lest any should bring

^a 1 Sam. xxvii. 9^b 1 Sam. xxviii. 1.^c 1 Sam. xxx. 2

news to Achish, and then he pretended, when presenting tribute from the spoil, that his raids had been made upon Judah and the other enemies of the Philistines. But this is not the only indication that in those early ages even the conscience of a good man hardly regarded the obligation of moral laws as extending to men of different and hostile races.

23. CALLED TO FIGHT AGAINST ISRAEL (1 Sam. xxviii. 1, 2 ; xxix.). An occasion very soon arose to call David's feudal services into requisition. War broke out again between the Philistines and Saul, and David promptly responded with his 600 men to the call of Achish for troops, and seems to have made up his mind, as from dire necessity, actually to fight against his country. When, however, in the train of Achish, he reached the rendezvous of the army on the plain of Jezreel, the other Philistine lords at once objected to his presence, urging that the runaway could find no better means of reconciling himself to his master than by deserting them in the fight, and making havoc of the Philistine army. Achish himself had no such fears, and assured David of his perfect trust in his integrity ; but, notwithstanding, he was compelled by the other lords to send the Hebrew outlaws back to their home. This termination was doubtless far from disagreeable to David, and it certainly did much to smooth his way to the Israelite throne in after time.

24. ZIKLAG BURNT DOWN: DAVID'S REVENGE (1 Sam. xxx.) David had only been three days absent from Ziklag, no longer than he must often have been before during his forays, but when he returned he found the whole village burnt to the ground and smoking in ashes. His men found, however, no remains of dead bodies among the ruins. Hence they concluded that though some enemy had burnt down the place, they had taken the women and children away with them for slaves, and not slain them, so that they might perhaps still

be recovered. As they afterwards found out, it was a strong troop of Amalekite raiders from the south who had fallen upon David's town in his absence,—in revenge, no doubt, for the devastations he had inflicted upon them. His followers were totally unmanned by this unexpected calamity, and spoke of stoning their leader to death ; but David's faith never left him. He bade the priest Abiathar put on the sacred robe, the ephod, and enquire by the lot whether the troop might be pursued with hopes of success. The answer was strongly in the affirmative ; and as a large troop like this could not fail to leave numerous indications of the route that they had taken, David at once led his band, wearied by their long march and disheartened by this reverse as they were, after the raiders. On reaching the ravine^a Besor, where the path perhaps became rugged and difficult, 200 men completely broke down with fatigue and could go no farther. The others pressed on, however, and by-and-bye found an Egyptian slave lying on the path, half dead with hunger and sickness, having been left there by his master to die when he became too weak to march. By giving him some dried fruit they gradually brought him to, and ascertained that he belonged to one of the Amalekites of whom they were in search. Knowing their accustomed haunts, he was able to conjecture with all but certainty where they would by this time be, and on obtaining David's promise and oath neither to put him to death nor to deliver him up to his master, whose cruelty he seemed to fear, he led them to the place. The Amalekites were found deep in the desert, where they had not dreamed of being followed by any one, celebrating with wild revelry the success of their raid. David swept down on them in this state, and in a battle which lasted from morning till night completely

^a Incorrectly rendered "brook." The word corresponds to the modern "Wady," *i.e.*, a hollow between heights, a river-bed.

routed them with immense slaughter. Only about 400 slaves,^a who of course were not allowed to take part in the battle, escaped on swift camels. The captive women and children were recovered, not one being missing, and the whole of the spoil collected by the Amalekites during their raid fell to the victors. The whole of the cattle and sheep were assigned to David as the chieftain's share of the booty;^b the rest of the spoil, in armour, clothing, jewels, &c., was divided equally. The 400 who had fought the battle were at first unwilling to allow any share to their 200 brethren who had stopt at the ravine of Besor. But David argued that this booty was Jehovah's gift to them, not their own earnings, and ruled that all should share in it alike. In this way it became a law in Israel that the spoil of battle must be equally divided among the actual warriors who had won it and those who had garrisoned the camp or the fortress at home, since both forms of service were alike indispensable. From his own share of this booty David sent presents to the elders of all the chief towns in the south of Judah, where he had been wont to live in the days of his flight before Saul. He thus kept them in mind that he still considered himself to belong to them, even though he had become a Philistine vassal, and was living for a time in Philistine territory.

25. TIDINGS OF SAUL'S DEATH (2 Sam. i.). On the third day after David's return to Ziklag, there came thither an Amalekite in the rent clothes and disordered hair of a mourner. He did low obeisance to David, and laid at his feet the *regalia* of Israel,—Saul's crown and bracelet. Being questioned, he told of the defeat of the Israelite army on Mount Gilboa, the death of Saul and Jonathan, and himself pretended to have been Saul's execu-

^a So read for "young men" in v. 17.

^b V. 20, the best reading is, "And they took all the flocks and herds, and drove them before him, saying, This is David's spoil

tioner, and thus to have got possession of the crown and bracelet. His story is plainly inconsistent with itself in several points, as well as inconsistent with the narrative of Saul's death in 1 Sam. xxxi. He averred that he had chanced to be near the battle-field on Mount Gilboa, and had seen Saul leaning wearily on his spear to rest, while the Philistine cavalry pursued hard after him. On seeing him, the king had beckoned to him and begged to be killed outright that his pain might be ended, which he, believing the king to be mortally wounded, had done. The Amalekite doubtless expected the reward of one who brings grateful tidings, but it was the reverse. David and his men rent their clothes, and mourned for Saul and for their fallen brethren the rest of that day. David then ordered the immediate execution of the Amalekite, as one who had confessed himself the murderer of his king. He thus gave one more proof that his opposition to Saul sprang from no unbridled ambition, or from mere lust of power, and that he regarded the divine law as beyond and before all personal advancement. The beautiful elegy that he composed on this occasion, and bade the men of Judah learn by heart, was first of all incorporated in a collection of national songs called "The Book of Jasher," i.e., the book of the Righteous One (Israel), and has been quoted from that collection by the writer of the books of Samuel :—

^a Raise monuments, O Israel ! on thy high places are the slain :
How have the heroes fallen !

^a This elegy is very difficult to translate. Hence several different versions are proposed for certain clauses. The first line is rendered by some, "*The gazelle (or wild roe, or ornament), O Israel, is slain upon thy heights.*" The ninth line is rendered, "*Or fields of heave-offerings, or, first-fruit offerings.*" The eleventh line may be, "*The shield of Saul, the shield not anointed with oil.*" For "*lovely and pleasant*" in the fifteenth line, some give "*beloved and kind;*" and for "*with scarlet along with your ornaments*" in the twentieth line, "*in purple with delight.*"—En.

Tell ye not the tale in Gath,
 Publish not the tidings in the streets of Ashkelon.
 Lest the daughters of the Philistines be glad,
 Lest the daughters of the uncircumcised exult.
 Ye mountains of Gilboa,
 Let there be no dew or rain upon you,
 Thou field of the mountains of death !
 For there were heroes' shields dishonoured,
 The shield of Saul, the shield of him who was anointed with
 the oil.
 From the blood of slain men, from the fat of heroes,
 The bow of Jonathan shrunk not back,
 And the sword of Saul turned not away.
 Saul and Jonathan—the lovely and the pleasant—
 In their lives and in their death were not divided,
 Than eagles they were swifter,
 Than lions they were stronger.
 Ye daughters of Israel, weep for Saul !
 Who clothed you with scarlet along with your ornaments,
 Who put ornaments of gold upon your dress.
 How have the heroes fallen in midst of war !
 Jonathan is slain on thy heights.
 Sad am I for thee, my brother Jonathan,
 Very pleasant wast thou to me :
 Thy love to me was wonderful,
 Beyond the love of women.
 How have the heroes fallen !
 And the instruments of war (*i.e.* warriors) perished !

26. DAVID MADE KING AT HEBRON (2 Sam. ii. 1-4). David's home in Ziklag had been burnt to the ground, and could not yet have been rebuilt, and now it was once more open to him to seek a home in Judah. He therefore enquired of God by the priestly oracle, whether he ought not to go into Judah, and was answered in the affirmative ; and the very ancient town of Hebron,^a which was at this time probably the most important city in Judah, was pointed out as the home he ought to choose. On the arrival of the troop at Hebron, they were cordially welcomed by the assembled elders of Judah. For many years their allegiance to Saul had been little

^a Now El-Khalil, *i.e.* The friend (of God), or Abraham's Town.

more than nominal, and we have seen that they received little or no protection from him. David, on the other hand, was their fellow-tribesman. He had protected life and property for his friends most effectively whilst hiding in their fastnesses ; and from Ziklag he had, by repeated raids, greatly weakened the dreaded nomadic tribes of the southern desert. In all these ways he had shown himself the only man fit to rule, and these considerations had served to explain to the elders the meaning of Samuel's anointing of him when a youth. With one consent they once more anointed David to be their king, and swore allegiance to him and him only. The red-haired and bright-eyed youth was still but thirty years of age, and yet he had risen by sheer talent and worth, (for family influence he had none), from the sheepfold to the throne. As we hear nothing for several years of aught but peace between him and the Philistines, it is possible that he still kept up his vassalage to Achish, and paid him tribute.

During his stay at Ziklag, David's band had been increased by additions from the tribe of Manasseh,^a who joined David when he was in the north, along with the Philistine army, before the battle of Mount Gilboa—a defection which must have weakened and disheartened Saul very much, and which shows how entirely he had lost favour all over Israel. To Ziklag also came more of Saul's own fellow-tribesmen of Benjamin, men expert, like all Benjamites, in handling the sling and the bow,^b and able to use right or left hand with equal facility. These and the other veterans of the fugitive period now, of course, went to Hebron, and their long practice in warfare fitted them to occupy positions of influence in David's army.

^a 1 Chron. xii. 19-21.

^b 1 Chron. xii. 1-7 ; *cf.* Judges xx. 16.

QUESTIONS AND POINTS FOR INQUIRY.

What were David's ideas of booty?
What was the position of slaves in battle?
When did David and the Amalekites come into conflict?
What made Hebron so sacred and important?
Ascertain who the Philistines and the Amalekites were?

CHAPTER IV.

KING OF JUDAH AT HEBRON.

27. KINDNESS TO THE DEAD COMMENDED (2 Sam. ii. 4-7). David's first act as king was to send his hearty thanks to the citizens of Jabesh-Gilead for an act of loyal reverence to the dead king. They had gone by night, and taken the corpses of Saul and his sons from the wall of Bethshan (now Beisân), where the Philistines had hung them up, and buried them in their own city with such honours as they were able to give. In thanking them for this kindness, David also informed them of his election as king by Judah, partly as the reason for taking it upon him thus to recognise their act, and partly, perhaps, with some hope that they too might be induced to declare for him.

28. CIVIL WAR: ASAHIEL'S DEATH (2 Sam. ii. 8-32). The other tribes, however, refused to acquiesce in Judah's choice, and still held with Saul's family. And since the Philistines, by the battle of Mount Gilboa, had doubtless got possession of most of the district west of Jordan, the general of the army and Prime Minister of Saul, Abner, took

the only remaining son of Saul, named Ishbosheth,^a over the Jordan to Mahanaim, and crowned him there. He proved a weak and inactive king. Indeed, he seems to have been little better than a puppet in Abner's hands. War between the two kingdoms was now of course inevitable. The northern kingdom could not but regard the southern as founded in rebellion. Yet the actual outbreak happened in a remarkable way. A band of soldiers, under Abner, met at the pool of Gibeon (now El Jib, six miles north of Jerusalem), with a band of David's men under Joab, David's nephew, who now appears as his general. The two parties remembered that they were both Israelites, and at first shrank from an engagement. By and by, however, Abner proposed that twelve men from each side should engage in a sham fight, for "amusement," and to show their skill in arms. Joab assented, but owing to the passionate feeling on both sides, the play soon became earnest. When the champions began to slay each other, the two armies rushed together, and a general battle ensued. From this turn of affairs, the place got its name, "the field of the deceivers," or "of unfair play." Abner's men were defeated, and put to flight, and in the pursuit many were slain, so that their total loss was three hundred and sixty, while on Joab's side only twenty were missing. Joab's brother, Asahel, a young man famed for his swiftness of foot, had set his heart on the capture or death of Abner, and followed close after him. Abner warned him to seek a foeman more his equal in years, but the youth persisted in his purpose. When it

^a His real name was Eshbaal (1 Chron. viii. 33; ix. 39), *i.e.*, "the lord's man," "baal" meaning "lord." In later times "baal" was known chiefly as the name of the Phœnician deity, and since the very name was therefore detested (compare Hosea ii. 16), copyists substituted "bosheth," or "besheth," *shame* for "baal," hence "Ishbosheth"—"Man of Shame." So 2 Sam. xi. 21, Jerubbesheth (Gideon) for Jerubbaal, and Mephibosheth (*i.e.* Meribbosheth, "fighter for Shame"), instead of Meribbaal, "fighter for the Lord" (1 Chron. viii. 34; ix. 40).

came to the single combat, Abner soon transfixed the youth with a spear-thrust in the belly, and he fell dead. This stopped the pursuit for a while ; all who came that way gathered sorrowfully round the corpse. Joab and Abishai, however, still pursued, having perhaps been on a different road. On their approaching a hill where a number of Benjamites had rallied round their leader, Abner called for a truce. Joab assured him that but for this acknowledgment of defeat, the pursuit would have lasted till morning,^a but now consented to recall his men. Both bands then marched homewards, and the body of Asahel was carried to Bethlehem and buried in the family sepulchre there.

29. CONSTANT GROWTH OF DAVID'S POWER (2 Sam. iii. 1-5.) The above is but one specimen of the encounters between Israel and Judah that must have been very frequent during those years. Victory inclined almost constantly to the side of David's hardy veterans, and his power and prestige kept increasing steadily. Moreover, he took care to add to his royal dignity, in true Oriental fashion, by marriage-alliances with neighbouring kings. He married four more wives during his stay in Hebron, one of them being the daughter of Talmai, King of Geshur, a district north-east of the lake of Galilee, and no doubt the other three were connected with princes or men of influence elsewhere. He reigned seven and a-half years at Hebron, but whether he was at war with Ishbosheth all that time is not certain. It is said, in 2 Sam. ii. 10, that Ishbosheth reigned only two years, and if this be the correct reading, (which is very doubtful), there must have been five and a-half years of an interregnum between Saul's death and Ishbosheth's coronation. Some suppose that during these five and a-half years Abner had been striving to wrest successive portions of Israelite territory from the hands

^a Verse 27 read "*only* in the morning."

of the Philistines, and that it was only after his success in this that he crowned Ishbosheth, and made war on Judah, which had continued in Philistine vassalage. It may be urged, on the other hand, that this war is not mentioned or referred to in the text, and that 2 Sam. iii. 18 seems to imply that Ishbosheth himself was a Philistine vassal.

30. ABNER'S QUARREL WITH ISHBOSHETH (2 Sam. iii. 6-21.) Ishbosheth, brought up amidst the flatteries of a court, was far too little a man of the world even to know where the strength of his kingdom lay. Abner had taken to wife a woman named Rizpah, who had been a concubine of Saul's, and Ishbosheth thoughtlessly charged him with treason on that account. Now, of course, the ancient world would have regarded such an act as an open claim to succeed Saul,^a but Ishbosheth ought to have known that in Abner's case there was no such desire. Abner was hotly enraged at the accusation: it showed Ishbosheth's ingratitude for his services so plainly. He at once told his royal puppet that he would support him no longer, and swore to work now for the fulfilment of the well-known prophetic promises to David. He there and then^b despatched messengers to David to ask for terms, while Ishbosheth, recognising too late his entire dependence on Abner, dared not say a word. David's first demand was the restoration of Michal, his first wife, whom Saul had given to one Phaltiel after David fled from Gibeah. Her loss was a public affront to David, the removal of which he had a right to demand. He might feel, too, that she would give his kingdom a certain appearance of legitimacy in the eyes of those who still adhered to Saul. The demand was, at the same time, publicly made by ambassadors sent to Ishbosheth, and being there supported by Abner, it could not be refused. Accord-

^a See 2 Sam. xvi. 21, 22; 1 Kings ii. 21, 22.

^b Ver. 12, the correct rendering is "on the spot" for "on his behalf."

ingly, after having spoken to the elders and the most influential men of the kingdom in favour of David, urging the predictions that he should be Israel's deliverer from the Philistines, and having found that they were now convinced that David alone was fit to rule, Abner proceeded to Hebron with Michal, who was followed to the frontier at Bahurim by her weeping husband. He was received most cordially by David, and arrangements were soon made for bringing all Israel under David's sway.

31. MURDER OF ABNER (2 Sam. iii. 22-39.) Since Abner had killed Asahel at Gibeon, the savage custom of blood-vengeance laid on Joab, his brother, the duty of avenging his death by slaying Abner. During this visit Joab was absent on military duty, and when he came home and heard of Abner's reception by David, he was angry that so fine a chance of revenge should have been lost. Pretending to know that Abner could only have come as a spy, he reproached David for silliness in letting him away, and at once, without David's knowledge, sent an express to bring him back, as if for further conference. When he returned, Joab and Abishai met him at the gate, and taking him aside from his retinue, as if to speak with him alone, stabbed him in the belly. When David was told of this deed of blood, he manifested great anger, and, loudly complaining that Joab was too influential in the state and too nearly related to himself to allow of his being properly punished for the murder, he imprecated divine curses on him and all his house. He ordered a general mourning for Abner, and in person followed the bier. As the corpse was laid in the grave, he broke out in the beautiful elegy—

“Should Abner have died as a fool^a dieth.
Thy hands were not bound,

a i.e. One flagrantly wicked (Ps. xiv. 1.; Prov. vii. 22; xix. 29; Gen. xxxiv. 7; Jos. vii. 15, etc.); and hence, so to speak, outside the law, to be slain by any one that finds him.

Thy feet were not brought near the fetters.^a
As one falls before wicked men, so didst thou fall."

By this behaviour, and by his refusal to taste food on this mournful day,^b the people were convinced that Abner's death was in no way of David's doing, and their opinion of his real kingliness was greatly confirmed.

32. MURDER OF ISHBOSHETH (2 Sam. iv.)
The death of Abner threw Ishbosheth and all his realm into the utmost consternation. The king had lost the one man who was strong to hold the helm of affairs for him. To the people the incapacity of their king had become evident; the negotiations with David had found too much support all over the land to be now broken off; yet who was there to carry them to a conclusion! The king would not, and no one else could. Two brothers, named Baanah and Rechab, from the town of Beeroth in Benjamin, a suburb of Gibeon, who had been captains in the army, resolved to cut the knot, and also, perhaps, to execute blood-vengeance on the house of Saul,^c by assassinating Ishbosheth. They came to the palace at Mahanaim as the king lay asleep during the noonday heat. Finding that the female doorkeeper^d had fallen asleep whilst cleaning some wheat, they slipped in past her to the king's room, beheaded him, and escaped with all possible speed to Hebron. They brought David the head of his rival, and doubtless expected much praise and reward for their boldness. But David had already waited too long for his kingdom to take it now from the hands of assassins, and at once ordered them to execution.

a i.e. Thy death was not that of a prisoner condemned by justice, but of a man set upon by murderers.

b i.e. Till sunset.

c See § 57, note *b*.

d Verse 6 must be amended according to the text of the LXX., "And behold, she that kept the door was cleaning wheat, and she fell asleep and slumbered, and Baanah, and Rechab his brother slipped in and," etc., verse 7.

He buried the head of Ishbosheth beside the body of Abner, and calmly waited till the people of Israel should declare their choice of him.

33. DAVID ANOINTED KING OVER ALL ISRAEL (2 Sam. v. 1-5 ; 1 Chron. xi. 1-3, xii. 23-40). He had not long to wait. The only representative of Saul in the male line now living was a son of Jonathan's, named Mephibosheth,^a and no one seems to have thought of setting him on the vacant throne. He was only twelve or thirteen years old,^b and he had been crippled for life by his nurse letting him fall from her arms when she heard the sad tidings of the battle of Mount Gilboa. Accordingly, the elders of the tribes, with their numerous retainers, all fully armed, met at Hebron, and offered allegiance to David. He was then once more anointed king over all Israel, after having reigned for seven and a half years over Judah alone. High festival was kept at Hebron for three days in honour of the occasion, and the reconciliation of North and South was ushered in with much joy. The choice of their king was the act of the whole people,—an important proof of the civil liberty which the nation's institutions still guaranteed to it.

QUESTIONS AND POINTS FOR INQUIRY.

What were the fortunes of the members of Saul's house who survived Gilboa ?

What instances of encounters between the Northern kingdom and the Southern are recorded ?

What led to Abner's joining David, and what was his fate ?

Why did David change his capital ?

What moral lessons may be learned from the events in this chapter ?

Who were David's worthies ?

What was the law of blood-vengeance ?

What is there to show the measure of liberty enjoyed by the people ?

Explain the position and historical associations of Mahanaim.

^a Strictly Meribbaal, see sec. 28. note a.

^b See 2 Sam. iv. 4.

CHAPTER V.

KING OF ALL ISRAEL.

34. JERUSALEM TAKEN AND FORTIFIED (2 Sam. v. 6-16 ; 1 Chron. xi. 4-9). A new capital was now the most crying need of the kingdom. Hebron lay too far south to be a suitable centre of government, and, moreover, the capital of an empire in those days required to be the most defensible city in the bounds. The finest natural fortress in the land was the rock of Zion, or Jebus, which was apparently on the boundary-line between Judah and the northern half of the kingdom. It was still held by a Canaanite tribe called, from its name, Jebusites, who had kept up some sort of independence. David had set his heart on this town as his capital, and marched against it with an army. The strength of the place is well shown by the proud boast of the inhabitants when they saw David's army appear before it,—that even the blind and the lame were enough to defend so impregnable a stronghold. David's men, however, managed to reduce it, special honours being gained by Joab for leading the assault. In return for the silly boast of the Jebusites in setting the blind and the lame to defend the walls, David gave over these helpless creatures to the discretion of the victors in a pithy saying that seems to have struck the people's fancy, and therefore been remembered : "Whosoever smiteth the Jebusites, let him strike the throats of the blind and the lame,^a hated of David's soul." This gave rise also to a common saying in after days, that the blind and the lame must never enter the temple on Zion, lest the king should be reminded of those

^a These words are obscure. Some render "let him hurl down the cliff the blind," &c.; others, "let him box the ears of the blind," &c.

whom he hated. David then fortified Zion according to his own ideas, and established his residence there, building a palace on Zion with stone and cedar-wood supplied by Hiram, king of Tyre, from Lebanon, and worked up by skilled Tyrian tradesmen.

35. WAR WITH THE PHILISTINES (2 Sam. v. 17-25 ; 1 Chron. xiv. 8-17). The Philistines had probably received tribute from David up to this time, and thus there had been peace between them. When they heard, however, that he was king of all Israel they knew that he would feel strong enough to claim complete independence. They therefore at once prepared to attack him, and sent an army into the valley of Rephaim, near Jerusalem. David seems at first to have met with some reverses,^a for he thought it best to leave Zion and retire southwards to the well-known hold of Adullam. He then enquired of God as to the success of an attack on the Philistines, and on receiving a favourable answer, at once gave them battle at a place afterwards called Baal-perazim [site unknown], and gained a great victory over them. From this event the place received its name, "the Lord of breaches," the place where the Lord had broken the ranks of the foe. The enemy's camp was rifled, and the images of their gods were found in it and taken away,^b as the victorious Philistines had once taken away the ark of the covenant.^c Notwithstanding these losses they soon came back to the same valley of Rephaim, and this time apparently in much greater strength, for when the oracle was enquired of, it forbade an attack in front. David was bidden march round behind the column, and take them in the rear, and to choose for the attack the moment when he should hear a marching or tramping

^a Or else, perhaps, the defences of Zion were not yet completed.

^b Ver. 21, "burned them" is a mistranslation for "took them away."

^c See 1 Sam. iv.

sound in the top of a grove of mulberry^a trees near him. Accordingly he marched northwards to Gibeon,^b and sweeping down suddenly on the rear of the enemy, he threw them into complete disorder, and chased them before him with great slaughter all the way to Gezer, on the plain near the sea-coast. Such victories as these soon sufficed to clear the land of all Philistine invaders. They gave up all hope of making Israel tributary so long as David ruled.

36. THE ARK BROUGHT TO JERUSALEM (2 Sam. vi. ; 1 Chron. xv., xvi.) David's next care was for religion. He resolved to make the civil capital of the country its religious capital too, by transferring to Jerusalem the ark of the covenant, which was at this time apparently the most revered relic of the Mosaic tabernacle. It was still at Baalah Judah or Kirjath-jearim (now Kuryet-el-Enab, seven miles from Jerusalem on the Jaffa road), in the house of one Abinadab on the hill.^c It had been brought thither after the Philistines had sent it home from its captivity,^d and there it had remained. David gathered together representatives from all Israel to the number of 30,000, and proceeded to Kirjath-jearim. The most approved method of conveying the ark from place to place seems at that time to have been to place it on a new cart,^e never used for any common or profane service, and drawn by oxen. This was the plan that David adopted. The two sons of Abinadab, Uzzah and Ahio,^f drove the cart, and the whole company sang and played before the ark with the greatest hearti-

^a Literally *baca-shrubs*. The Septuagint version gives *pear-trees*. Some suppose the aspen-poplar to be meant, others a balsam-shrub. The tree cannot be identified.—Ed.

^b 1 Chron. xiv. 16, the more correct reading for Geba of 2 Sam. v 25. LXX. has "Gibeon" even in Samuel.

^c So translate in vers. 3, 4, for "at Gibeah."

^d 1 Sam. vi., vii.

^e See 1 Sam. vi. 7.

^f *Ahio* might be rendered "his brother," so that it is most likely not a proper name at all.

ness.^c But when the procession came to a threshing-floor outside the town the cart shook from the roughness of the road, and Uzzah put forth his hand to steady the ark, not thinking of the sanctity of the symbol of God's presence, and in an instant he fell dead on the spot. David regarded this untoward incident as a mark of the Divine displeasure at his moving the ark from Kirjath-jearim, and at once broke off the procession, and had the ark conveyed back to the nearest house, which happened to belong to one Obed-Edom ("worshipper of Edom"), a Philistine from Gath.^b Three months after this David was told that the house of Obed-Edom had been notably blessed in connection with the presence of the ark. He then recovered from his abject dread of it, and went down once more to bring it up to Zion. This time he caused it to be carried, not in a cart, but on the shoulders of Levites.^c When the bearers had gone six paces safely, sacrifices were offered of thanks that God had allowed His sacred symbol to be moved. The procession was accompanied, like the previous one, with song, music, and dancing, in which David cordially joined. He had been dressed for the occasion in the priestly robe called the Ephod, and when the ark was set up in the tent prepared for it on Zion, the king pronounced over the whole people the priestly blessing.^d Burnt offerings and peace offerings were sacrificed in great multitudes, and from the flesh of the peace offerings pieces were distributed, along with bread and a cake of raisins,^e to every one who was present. Psalm

^a For "on all instruments of fir wood," ver. 5, read, as in LXX. and 1 Chron. xiii. 8, "with all their might and with singing."

^b The term *Gittite* need not imply that he was a Philistine of Gath. It may mean that he belonged to the town called Moresheth-Gath in the south of Judah, or to the Levitical city, Gath-rimmon, in the tribe of Dan. We learn from 1 Chron. xv. 17, 18, and 24; xvi. 4, 5, that he was a Levite.—ED.

^c Num. iv. 4-15.

^d Num. vi. 24-26. Some think it simply a benediction, such, perhaps, as Solomon pronounced at the dedication of the Temple.—ED.

^e So translate for "flagon of wine," in 2 Sam. vi. 19; 1 Chr. xvi. 3.

xxiv. is generally supposed to have been written for this festive procession, and sung by Levitical choirs in alternate stanzas. Psalm ci. may well also, as some think, express for us David's ideal of life as formed at this time—the Divine rules according to which he determined to conduct his government. And if it be so, we shall not wonder that David was called “the man after God's own heart.” From this time the worship on Zion, as being under the royal patronage, became ever grander and better executed. The tent of the ark was filled with spoils of victory and with free-will offerings; the priests and Levites were sought out and divided into regular classes and detachments, and appointed to wait on the various services in regular order; and to worship God in Zion soon became the Israelite's highest religious privilege, and Zion itself seemed so much the place where alone God could be spiritually seen, that He seemed to dwell there, and Zion became “God's holy hill.”

37. MICHAL'S CONTEMPT FOR DAVID'S RELIGIOUS ZEAL (2 Sam. vi. 20-23; 1 Chron. xv. 29.) When the king returned to his home, his wife Michal, who had been observing the procession from a window, reproached him for degrading himself by the dance before the ark that he had taken part in. She had been brought up in a court where heart-religion was little cared for, and she could measure greatness only by the standards and rules of fashion, and David had disregarded these laws of fashion in his zeal. The king replied that any natural expression of joy and thanksgiving to God was right, if it was heartfelt, whatever the rules of fashion might say. If this proud princess counted such behaviour base or vile, then he desired to be yet more vile, knowing that all plain and straightforward souls would see his truest exaltation therein.

38. DAVID'S WARS OF CONQUEST: (1.) THE PHILISTINES (2 Sam. viii. 1; 1 Chron. xviii. 1.)

The nation of Israel, being now united into one compact kingdom, and governed by a prince whose whole character inspired it with lofty purpose and noble enthusiasm, was strong enough for any enterprise. Accordingly in the course of a few years a series of conquests was made which reduced the whole territory between the Euphrates and the Egyptian boundary under David's supremacy. Of these wars, however, very few particulars have been preserved. The first to be attacked were naturally the Philistines, who had tyrannized over Israel more or less severely since the days of Samson. Regarding them we have only the somewhat obscure notice that David took from them "the bridle of the arm" (Metheg-ammah), that is to say, their supremacy over Israel. Whether he reduced them to a tributary state is not said, but it is most likely that he would. Several of David's "heroes" seem to have won their laurels in this war. In a battle at Pas-dammim (the Ephes-dammim of 1 Sam. xvii. 1) one Eleazar, the son of Dodo,^a stood his ground single-handed when all about him had fled, and kept the Philistine army at bay, fighting till his hand stuck to his sword, and when the Israelites who had fled gathered courage and rallied again, they found the victory won, and nothing to do but to collect the spoil. A similar deed of daring is recorded of Shammah, the son of Agee, and these two were reckoned among the three mightiest of David's warriors. In one of these battles David's life was in great danger, as he gave battle to a Rephaite^b of gigantic stature. So faint had he become, that had not his nephew Abishai, Joab's brother, come to his help, the king would have been slain. From this time forth it was made a rule in Israel, that the king should not go out to battle in person, "lest he should quench the light of Israel."

^a 2 Sam. xxiii. 8-12; 1 Chron. xi. 10-14. In ver. 9 read as in 1 Chron. xi. 13, "He was with David at Pasdammim when the Philistines gathered together there to battle."

^b Gen xiv. 5; Deut. ii. 11; and iii. 11. Compare also 2 Sam. xxi. 15-17.

In all, four Rephaites of unusual stature had assisted the Philistines, and their death was reckoned among the greatest feats of arms of David's men.^a

39. (2.) THE MOABITES (2 Sam. viii. 2; 1 Chron. xviii. 2.) The cause of the war with Moab is quite unknown, but there must have been a change in its policy since the time when David had placed his parents under the protection of the king of Moab. Neither is anything recorded as to the war, save that it was completely successful, and that the prisoners of war were treated with great severity. They were made to lie down on the ground in rows, and then with a measuring line they were divided into three divisions, two of which were led at once to execution, and the third saved alive as slaves. The Moabites became tributary vassals of Israel, and so continued till the death of Ahab (2 Kings i. 1, and iii. 4-27), when they again recovered their freedom under Mesha.

40. (3.) THE AMMONITE AND ARAMEAN KINGDOMS (2 Sam. viii. 3-13, and x.; 1 Chron. xviii. 3-10, and xix.). The broad district between Canaan and the Syrian desert all the way north to the Euphrates was the next conquest, and by it many kings and peoples became tributary to David. The land immediately north of Moab, and east of the Israelite possessions beyond Jordan, formed the kingdom of Ammon, with its capital Rabbah: the rest of the territory of which we speak was divided among Aramean ("Syrian") tribes. North of the Lebanons, there were two kingdoms, Zobah on the east, reaching to the Euphrates, and Hamath (capital, Hamath on the Orontes), between Zobah and the sea-coast. South of these lay the kingdom of Damascus, and somewhere between it and Ammon, the kingdom of Rehob or Beth-rehob. Along the base of Hermon lay the kingdom of Maachah, and south-east of it, Tob.^b The three last named lay on the edge of the

^a 2 Sam. xxi. 18-22.

^b Judges xl. 3. In 2 Sam. x. 6, 8, for "and of Ish Tob," read "and of the men of Tob."

great Syrian desert, and were most likely half-nomadic tribes whose flocks would range over all the little green patches in the desert. David's rising power soon excited the jealousy and fear of these petty kingdoms, and they joined in a league for his destruction. Between Damascus and Bashan lay, further, the small kingdom of Geshur, in the Syrian highlands; but Talmai, its king, was already joined in friendship with David,^a and may have helped him against the other Aramean kings.

41. OCCASION OF THE ARAMEAN LEAGUE (2 Sam. x. 1-14; 1 Chron. xix. 1-15). The first to take up an attitude of defiance was Ammon, whose power was, of course, most immediately threatened. On the death of Nahash, the Ammonite king, who, since his defeat at Jabesh-Gilead,^b seems to have lived in friendship with Israel, David sent a friendly embassy to congratulate Hanun, his son, on his accession, and to offer sympathy in connection with his father's death. The Ammonite leaders, however, perhaps confiding in the fresh vigour of their young king, advised Hanun to break with David at once, and crush his power before it became universal. Accordingly, they pretended to suspect that the ambassadors were really spies sent to survey the city for an attack, covered them with the vilest insults, and sent them away. Knowing well that David could not possibly allow such an outrage to pass unavenged, they then at once prepared for war. They were able to persuade the Arameans of Zobah, Rehob, Maachah, and Iob to make common cause with them, and received from these realms 33,000 hired soldiers. These at once laid siege to Medeba, an Israelite town in the south of the tribal land of Reuben. David also promptly levied all his available forces, and sent them against Ammon, under the command of Joab and Abishai. In approaching Rabbah the Israelites incautiously allowed themselves to be led into an am-

^a See § 29.

^b 1 Sam. xi.

buscade, for the Arameans, giving up the siege of Medeba, came suddenly upon their flank and rear, whilst the Ammonites were in front. In these circumstances, Joab took half the army and proceeded to attack the Arameans, while Abishai, with the other half, faced the Ammonites. Joab soon put his opponents to flight, and, on seeing that, the Ammonites fled too, and shut themselves up in the city. The season being too late for a siege, or other things threatening, the Israelite army could not follow up its victory. They collected what spoil they could, and returned home for the present.

42. THE ARAMEANS REDUCED TO SUBJECTION (2 Sam. viii. 3-12, x. 15-19 ; 1 Chron. xviii. 3-10, xix. 16-19.) When the campaigning season of the year came round again, the Arameans made strong efforts to recover the ground they had lost. Hadadezer,^a king of Zobah, was now more alarmed at David's successes than ever, and determined to make an attempt on his own account against him. He seems to have been the over-lord of all the other petty kingdoms above named,^b so he once more called for a levy of all their forces, and also persuaded the allied Arameans beyond the Euphrates to send him troops. His army seems to have been extremely well appointed, the officers having actually shields of gold, or overlaid with gold, and it must have been especially strong in cavalry. It was put under the command of Shobach,^c Hadadezer's general, and marched towards the Israelite frontier. David received timely notice of his preparations, and, levying his whole military force, he marched northwards to meet Shobach. The armies joined battle at a place called Helam (site unknown). David was completely victorious ; and 1700 horsemen, and 20,000 foot soldiers, were taken prisoners. An immense and very

^a Hadarezer, 2 Sam x. 16, and 1 Chron. xviii. 3, &c., is thought to be a copyist's error for Hadadezer.

^b 2 Sam. x. 19.

^c Or Shophach (1 Chron. xix. 16).

rich spoil fell also to the victors. The Arameans of Damascus next joined the league with Hadadezer, and another great battle was fought soon after, which ended in another great victory for Israel. The allies lost 22,000 men in this battle, and their power was completely broken. Throughout Zobah, Damascus, and all the smaller kingdoms, David's supremacy was acknowledged, and he established his officers in the chief cities to represent him, and to collect the tribute. On hearing of his victory, Tou,^a king of Hamath, sent Hadoram,^a his son, to congratulate David, and to offer his submission also. He brought rich gifts with him, and no doubt agreed to a yearly tribute also. After the last battle, David erected a trophy on the spot, the only case in which this custom is mentioned in Israel.^b He adhered, however, to the usual policy of Israel, and disabled most of the captured horses, reserving only enough for one hundred chariots.

43. (4.) **EDOM REDUCED** (2 Sam. viii. 13, 14 ; 1 Kings xi. 15-18 ; 1 Chron. xviii. 12, 13). About this time fell also the subjugation of the mountaineers south of the Dead Sea, the Edomites. They seem to have marched northwards to the Valley of Salt, near the Dead Sea, perhaps to give help to the Arameans, or Ammonites. There they were met and routed by David's men.^c They fled then to their mountain fastnesses, but were closely followed by Joab and an army, who hunted them from rock to rock for six months. The only way to pacify the country was found to be by a war of extermination. Every male taken in arms was put to death by Joab, and most of the royal family perished, one young man alone escaping to Egypt. The country had then

^a As in 1 Chron. xviii. These readings are believed to be more correct than *Toi* and *Joram* in Samuel.

^b 2 Sam. viii. 13, seems to be best rendered, "and David made him a monument. And when he returned he smote Edom in the valley of Salt," &c.

^c See note *b*.

to acknowledge its defeat, and, like the other nations already conquered, to receive officers of David to reside in its cities, as an open mark of subjection.

44. **SIEGE AND CAPTURE OF RABBAH** (2 Sam. xi. 1, xii. 26-31 ; 1 Chron. xx. 1-3). All this time the Ammonites seem to have been left alone. With the opening of the next campaigning season, however, David's army poured into their territory, carrying with them, as usual, the sacred ark of the covenant (2 Sam. xi. 11). The whole country was laid waste, and the inhabitants were shut up within their fortified capital Rabbah. This city consisted of two parts, one half called "the city of waters," being on the river-side, the other, which was defended by a separate wall, being a citadel on the higher ground away from the river. How long the siege lasted is not known, but Joab at last succeeded in forcing the lower city. The Ammonite army then withdrew to the citadel, and still held out. But as the castle would probably be without water, the reduction of the whole town was a question of very short time. Joab, therefore, sent to inform the king, and begged him to come and complete the work, that he might have the glory of the victory. Soon after David's arrival the upper city was taken, and the whole wealth of this kingdom fell to David as spoil. Their king's crown, which was of gold a talent weight (158 lbs. Troy) and set with jewels, was placed on David's head. The number of prisoners was very large, and the treatment of these prisoners is the cruellest act recorded of David as a warrior. The details are almost too harrowing to repeat. No doubt the Israelites had been maddened at the insults which led to the war, and further enraged by the Ammonites stirring up so many other nations against them, but the tortures inflicted would fall chiefly on those who were least guilty—on the rank and file, not the leaders. The simple account is : "He sawed them with saws, and

with harrows of iron, and axes of iron, and made them pass through the brick-kiln : and so did he to all the cities of the children of Ammon." ^a

45. **DAVID AND MEPHIBOSHETH** (2 Sam. ix.) David had not forgotten his solemn covenant of friendship with Jonathan, and no selfish fears prevented him from carrying it out. When he was settled in peace in Jerusalem, he found out an old steward of the house of Saul, named Ziba, and enquired if there were any of Jonathan's descendants or near relatives still living, to whom he might show kindness. Ziba was able to tell him that Mephibosheth, ^b Jonathan's son, who had been crippled by a fall at the time of his father's death, was living in Lo-debar beyond Jordan, in the house of one Machir. David at once sent for Mephibosheth, and restored to him all Saul's lands and family possessions, and appointed Ziba to manage them for him as steward or factor. He gave Mephibosheth also a permanent seat at the royal table as a pensioner, and he took up his residence in Jerusalem thenceforth. He continued loyal and faithful to David's cause to the end of his life.

46. **DAVID'S ADULTERY** (2 Sam. xi. 2-27.) The narrative that we have now to study, shows most clearly how much more even this portion of the Bible is than a mere collection of national annals. The prophetic historian passes over the wars and imperial magnificence of David with the briefest notice, but enlarges on the crisis of his moral life. His chief aim, indeed, in writing history is to show the growth of God's kingdom. Oriental opinion in general regarded a large number of wives as a necessary part of the magnificence of royalty, and the Israelite religion at this time tolerated such polygamy without approving it, but adultery it abhorred. Yet the

^a The composition of Psalm xviii. (2 Sam. xxii.) falls about this time, and it should be read in connection with this portion of the history.

^b Strictly Meribba^al, see Section 28, note ^a.

national historians make no attempt to conceal David's fall. The fact that they care to record it, and to tell at length of his deep repentance, shows how the divine guidance had opened and developed the conscience of the whole nation. Such moral crises as this are beneath the dignity of uninspired history, but they form the choice material of inspired history, and it was inspired history that this nation cared to read and to preserve.

It was after the great Aramean victories, and while the siege of Rabbah was going on, that David fell into this shameful sin. When Uriah, the Hittite, one of his most distinguished warriors, was away with the army, the king persuaded Bathsheba, that soldier's wife, to leave her own home, and enter the palace. In this he knew well that he did a great wrong, and he tried hard to secure himself against its evil consequences. Having failed in one scheme, he had recourse at last in his desperation to a mean stratagem which Saul had once tried against himself. He sent Uriah, whom he had summoned from the seat of war, back with a letter to Joab, which bade the general place him in some post of great danger, and leave him there to perish defending it. This was done: he was sent to do some work quite close to the city walls, and there he was killed by a stone hurled from the wall above. When this was reported, David married Bathsheba, immediately after the days of mourning for her husband were at an end.

47. NATHAN'S REBUKE, AND DAVID'S REPENTANCE (2 Sam. xii.) Such crimes were doubtless common enough with the monarchs of those days,^a and little enough thought of. But the peculiar greatness of Israel is seen in this, that one so admired and now so powerful as David was not allowed to sin without bold challenge. The king kept up the appearance of innocence; but the prophet Nathan,

^a See Gen. xii. 11-15; xx.; xxvi. 7-10.

inspired by God, saw that such concealment was but cherishing the deadly leprosy in the heart of the nation, and inviting it to spread over the whole body. David must be brought to free confession and repentance—the only means of saving himself and his people. First of all, in true Oriental fashion, Nathan made David condemn his own deed in the abstract, by an exquisite parable of a rich man who could not be content with the many luxuries and indulgences he had, but must needs go and rob his poor neighbour of his one little joy and delight. He then delivered God's word, that David himself was the wealthy self-seeker who had merited death, according to his own decision. He recounted the many divine gifts and joys that he had received, and showed how thankless he had proved himself to be. The hypocritical concealment had by this time become intolerable to David,^a and he now penitently confessed his sin to the prophet. Nathan assured him of divine forgiveness if he was penitent, but added that "as he had blasphemed the Lord greatly"^b by his crime, some punishment would befall him. His child should die: the sword would never leave his house henceforth: and as he had vilely injured Uriah, so he himself should have to suffer similar injury. David's repentance was complete: the fall left him a sadder and a humbler man. In the narrative we hardly know which is more to be admired, the bold truthfulness of the prophet, or the humble submission and deep repentance of the king. Between them David was saved from falling into the godless despair and hypocrisy of Saul's later years.

48. DEATH OF THE CHILD (2 Sam. xii. 15-23). David's little child soon afterwards became ill, and he at once recognised in the event the beginning

^a Psalm xxxii. seems to have been written on this occasion, and verses 3, 4, describe the pain of the concealment. Psalm li. is also connected by most with the same period in David's life.—EDITOR.

^b So read in verse 14 for "given occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme."

of his punishment. He refused all food, lay on the ground all night, and prayed to God for mercy. When his nearest relatives came and tried to comfort him, he would not be moved. For six days this went on, and on the seventh day the child died. His servants were now afraid to tell him of its death, dreading a yet wilder outburst of grief. But he soon read the truth in their altered behaviour, and bade them tell him whether the child were dead or not. They answered that he was. Then, to their astonishment, David at once arose, removed all traces of his mourning instead of redoubling them, and after worshipping God, took food again. When they questioned him as to this strange procedure, he explained that his prayers and mourning were intended to move God to spare the life of the child, but now it was beyond recall, and he must submit. He would go to his child in the other world, some day : his son would never come back to him.

49. BIRTH OF SOLOMON (2 Sam. xii. 24, 25.) This same Bathsheba afterwards became the mother of David's favourite son and successor, Solomon (*Heb.* Shelōmōh, Peaceful), whose name seems intended to commemorate the conclusion of the wars with neighbouring nations. He was committed into the hand of the prophet Nathan for his upbringing, and the prophet gained a liking for him, which he expressed by naming him Jedidiah, "beloved of Jehovah."

50. A TEMPLE PROPOSED (2 Sam. vii. ; 1 Chron. xvii.) It was in the peaceful years that followed the close of the great wars, when David was reigning over all Israel and drawing tribute from all the other kings between the Euphrates and Mount Seir, that he thought of building a palace or temple for the ark of God, as he had already built one for himself. Was it right for him to live in a cedar-roofed and cedar-lined palace whilst the ark of God had only a tent ? Should he spend money in build-

ing and decorating a palace for himself, and none on a palace for the worship of God? He had dedicated to God portions of the most valuable spoil of the conquered nations, and ornamented the tent of the ark therewith. But would not a splendid palace for God's service make that service more attractive to men? Would it not give increased solemnity and reverence to the worship? Would it not tend to call forth more awe and deeper devotion? He consulted Nathan about this, and he at first approved the design. But that very night the divine revealing voice decided otherwise. The ark had shared the wanderings of Israel, and never had God asked for a more gorgeous temple. The simple tent was more in accordance with the simple and sternly spiritual character of the religion. There was as much danger as advantage in a divine service marked by outward pomp and brilliance. Yet David had done well to care for the service of God, and, because his heart's desire was to work for God, the Lord would make for him a house. The throne of Israel should be for ever in his family. If his sons should sin against God, they should be punished like other men, but the kingdom would not be torn from them as from Saul's house. The reigning king of his family should be God's son,^a standing nearest God and representing Him on earth. The progress of God's kingdom, or of true religion, should be the progress of David's line. This point constituted the Messianic element in the prophecy. It limited the hopes of the world's redemption to David's line, as Jacob's prophecy had long ago limited it to the tribe of Judah.^b

On receiving this divine message through Nathan, David went into the sanctuary, and sitting down,^c poured forth his heartfelt thanks to God for it. He dwelt on the glory of Israel as the one nation hon-

^a Compare Ps. ii. 6.

^b See Gen. xlix. 10.

^c The posture is noteworthy.

oured of God to see the Lord's special wonders of grace in their own choice and redemption from Egypt. He thanked God, above all, that he had not only promised favour to himself, but to his family and descendants for a long time to come. At a time when the doctrine of an immortality of bliss was but vaguely known, such immortality in one's descendants was much longed for, and this partly explains the dread and shame felt at the want of offspring.

QUESTIONS AND POINTS FOR INQUIRY.

Explain the situation and early history of Jerusalem.

By what victories did David clear the land of the Philistines?

State David's dealings with the Moabites at different periods of his career.

Who educated Solomon?

What made Medeba famous?

How did the Aramean league rise?

What was the extent of David's dominions after his wars of conquest?

Who were the Ammonites?

Sketch the fortunes of the Ark since Eli's days.

What about the practice of trophy-raising in Israel?

CHAPTER VI.

YEARS OF DECLINE.

51. What remains to be told of David's history is mostly a tale of "Decline and Fall." His empire did not lose in extent of territory, but it became dis-united and restless. Hitherto it has been one long catalogue of success and progress; but the highest point has been reached and it cannot be maintained. As if some envious genius had grudged the people their healthy virtue and their prosperity, there must now come bitter miseries upon them. David's crime

in the matter of Uriah had broken the spell that seemed to be over his life, and since then the unity of the nation, its peace, and its hearty boldness in all enterprises were gone, and its good fortune with them.

52. AMNON'S CRIME (2 Sam. xiii.) It must have been with a very sad heart that David began to see his own misconduct reflected in that of his eldest son Amnon, born to him by his first wife, Ahinoam of Jezreel. He had called him "Amnon, Faithful;" but the fair name proved only a pious wish, and no description of his real character. This Amnon shamefully injured the good name of his half-sister Tamar ("Palm"), David's daughter by Maachah of Geshur, and treated her with heartless cruelty.

David, of course, soon heard of the crime, but, with a foolish weakness, he forbore to punish it. "He vexed not the spirit of Amnon his son, for he loved him, because he was his firstborn."^a

53, 54. ABSALOM'S VENGEANCE & FLIGHT (2 Sam. xiii. 22-38.) Absalom was a man of daring character and regal pride, and as Oriental custom made the defence of a sister one of a brother's most urgent duties, he at once resolved to wipe out this stain in Amnon's blood. To secure his end, however, he went about the affair with perfect coolness, behaving to Amnon exactly as if nothing had happened. Two whole years he calmly waited his time, till he thought the affair would be forgotten, and all suspicion gone from his victim's mind. Then on the occasion of a sheep-shearing festival on his private estate at Baal-Hazor, north-west of Jerusalem, he invited the king and all the young princes to a banquet. David declined, and Absalom, who did not really want him, then begged that Amnon might be sent to grace the feast—the heir-apparent instead of the king. The king at first wanted to keep him

^a These words are added to verse 21 in the Septuagint.

back too, perhaps from some vague fear of mischief, but he at last consented. During the banquet, when Amnon was no longer sober enough to defend himself, the servants fell on him at a signal from Absalom, and slew him. Hereupon, of course, the whole company rose in terror and fled homewards. The rumour of the bloody deed, however, reached Jerusalem before them, and in a much exaggerated form. David was told that all his sons had been slain by Absalom, at which he fell into the wildest expressions of grief. The subtle Jonadab alone suspected the truth, and he assured the king that only Amnon would have been slain. He had read this purpose of vengeance in Absalom's face, he said, ever since the dishonour of Tamar. His conjecture was soon confirmed by the report of the watchman, who "came and told the king, and said, I see men coming from the way of Horonaim (*i.e.*, the *two* Bethhorons) by the hillside,"^a and this proved to be the princes, who soon arrived. Meantime Absalom had escaped to Geshur, where he lived for three years at the court of his grandfather Talmai in a sort of exile. Talmai was doubtless a vassal of David's, but this would involve no more than a payment of tribute. In the government of his own territory he would be supreme, and thus could protect Absalom. But, at any rate, David's paternal love was too shortsighted for him to seek to punish Absalom, especially as he must have felt that the deed was occasioned by his own neglect of duty to Amnon.

55. ABSALOM BROUGHT BACK TO JERUSALEM (2 Sam. xiii. 39; xiv. 1-22.) By the end of three years David's anger was appeased, and he was yearning for Absalom's return, while yet hesitating to bring an unpunished murderer back to court. But Absalom was a great favourite with Joab, and when Joab noticed David's condition, he took means to remind him that mercy had

^a These words are added to verse 34 by the Septuagint.

its place and its rights as well as justice. He brought up from Tekoah (now *Tekûa*, twelve miles south of Jerusalem) a woman noted for her cleverness, and told her what to do. She came before the king as he sat to dispense justice, dressed in the deepest mourning, and fell down before him with a cry for help. She told how she had been left a widow with two sons, and how these had quarrelled and fought, till one was slain. Now, of course, the whole family was upon her, seeking to carry out the old law of blood-vengeance by slaying the other son too. But if they succeeded her husband's name would totally perish, like a log quite burnt out. The king at once promised that her son should be protected. She then prayed that if this protection were contrary to right, and sinful, the wrong might be upon her and not on the king, and having thus reminded him that it *was* unlawful, insinuated that he might give his oath as well as his word, which he did. She then begged leave to tell the king that his decision condemned his own behaviour. For, as her relatives wanted to deprive her husband of his heir, was not he in the same way depriving the people of God of their heir-apparent? Life was short; the dead were dead; vengeance could not bring them back, and God Himself showed men an example of mercy. However, she had gained her case, and now she would go home happy, she said; as if this reference to the king's behaviour had been only the casual chatter of a talkative woman. But the king now divined that this had been her chief business all along, and knowing Joab's favour for Absalom, surmised that she had done it at his instigation. She confessed that this was so, for what secret could any one keep from the king, who was wise to know all things as an angel of God? David then sent for Joab, and, much to his delight, bade him go to Geshur, and bring his favourite home.

56. HIS RESTORATION TO FAVOUR (2 Sam.

xiv. 24, 28-33.) When Absalom arrived, the king's mind had so far changed that he still refused to see him, and for two years the prince lived in his own house at Jerusalem without being allowed to come to court. He tried to get Joab to intercede for him with his father, but Joab would not even come near him. At last, by commanding his servants to set Joab's barley field on fire, he obtained an interview with Joab, who came to complain of the outrage, and persuaded him again to be his mediator with his father. He was successful, and the erring son, falling at the feet of his father, received the kiss of reconciliation after five years of banishment.

57. THE THREE YEARS OF FAMINE (2 Sam. xxi. 1-14.) Somewhere about this time the land was visited by a drought and scarcity for three years running^a David inquired of God by the priestly oracle the cause of the calamity, and was answered that it was for a breach of faith committed by Saul, the former king. In his anxiety, perhaps, to confirm the power of Israel, Saul had tried to exterminate the Canaanite tribe that dwelt at Gibeon, although they had received an oath of protection from Joshua at the time of the conquest, and had lived peaceably ever since. When asked what satisfaction they demanded, the Gibeonites^b refused to take blood-money for the loss of their relatives, and demanded seven of Saul's descendants, whom they would impale before the sanctuary at Saul's town Gibeah.^c David had no choice but to agree, so he delivered up to them two sons of Saul by a concubine Rizpah, and

^a In Sam. xxi. 1, the Hebrew has no "then," as if this event were placed later than Absalom's rebellion. The Hebrew is simply, "And there was a famine," &c. The writer's plan seems to have been to put the public calamities of David's reign together at the close of the narrative. Moreover, Shimei (2 Sam. xvi. 8) seems to refer to this event as already past at the time of David's flight.

^b It has been conjectured that the migration of the Beerothites to Gittaim was one of the incidents of this war of extermination (2 Sam. iv. 3), for Beeroth was a mere suburb of Gibeon (Josh. ix. 17), and thus that the murder of Ishbosheth was partly prompted by revenge.

^c Some think Gibeon should be read for Gibeah.

five sons of Merab,^a his eldest daughter, sparing the posterity of Jonathan on account of his oath of friendship. These seven were impaled by the Gibeonites in the beginning of barley harvest (beginning of April), and their bodies were allowed to hang till rain fell again. With self-denying love, Rizpah watched the dead all this time, never leaving the rock where they hung by day or by night, keeping off the vultures by day, and the dogs and prowling jackals by night. When the rain fell, and the anger of God was seen to be at an end, the corpses were taken down and buried, along with the bones of Saul and Jonathan which had been brought from Jabesh-Gilead for the purpose, in the family sepulchre at Zelah, in Benjamin.

58. THE CENSUS AND THE PESTILENCE (2 Sam. xxiv. ; 1 Chron. xxi.) The second great calamity of David's reign was an attack of the pestilence. The occasion was now a sin of David's, not his predecessor's. An evil suggestion was made to his mind that he should take a general census of the population under his direct rule. The intention of this measure must have been more than a mere childish curiosity to know the number of his subjects, else it is not easy to see wherein the sin lay, especially as Moses himself had twice made such a census.^b The suggestion is, therefore, very probable, that David wished to found a powerful military despotism on the model of Phoenicia or Egypt, by starting a system of general taxation and military service. This would have been seeking to raise himself at the expense of the liberties of the people, and would have been a departure from the Messianic ideal of the Israelite ruler, which demanded that he should live for the unseen world, not for self-glorification. When the king proposed the measure, Joab and the

^a So read for "Michal" in verse 8, and "bore unto" for "brought up for."

^b Num. i. and xxvi.

other generals at once opposed it, but they could not shake the king's determination. Accordingly, they were sent over the land to take up a list of all the males of military age. They began in the south-east of the kingdom, across the Jordan, at Aroer in Reuben, and proceeded northwards to Gilead and Tahtim-hodshi^a and to Dan in the extreme north,^b and thence eastward to Zidon, and then south through the tribes west of Jordan, as far as Beersheba in the extreme south. The number was found to be 800,000 in Israel, and 500,000 in Judah, excluding the priestly tribe of Levi, and the town of Jerusalem.^c This mustering of the forces had taken up nine months and twenty days. At the end of this time David became sensible of his sin in connection with the scheme, and the prophet Gad^d appeared before him offering a choice of three punishments, three years of famine, three months of defeat in war, or three days of pestilence. David chose the last, for the pestilence was commonly known as "the stroke of God," and he would rather be in God's hands than at the mercy of human foes. On this the dreaded scourge (cholera or the plague?) began, and 70,000 men were soon swept away by it.

59. THE PESTILENCE STAYED (2 Sam. xxiv. 16-25 ; 1 Chron. xxi. 15-30). Jerusalem marvellously escaped the plague, although it came extremely near the capital. It was raging just outside the walls : it came even to the threshing-floor of a Jebusite

^a Often mentioned in the Egyptian inscriptions.

^b In verses 5-7 we must translate, "And they began from Aroer, and from the city in the midst of the ravine, toward Gad and toward Jazer; then they came to Gilead and to the land of the Hittites unto Kedesh, and they came to Dan, and from Dan they made a circuit unto Zidon."

^c In 1 Chron. xxi. 5, 6, the numbers are 1,100,000 Israelites, and 470,000 Judeans, the discrepancy being due, perhaps, to the fact that (see 1 Chron. xxvii. 24) the result of the census was not entered in the state records, but left to the chances of oral tradition. The narrative in *Chronicles* also states that Benjamin was not counted. It is possible that *Benjamin* is named simply as the tribe of Jerusalem.—ED.

^d Not Nathan, a mark that this happened early in the reign.

named Araunah,^a on the hill on which the temple was afterwards built. At this time a vision of a destroying angel was seen by David and his ministers near that very spot, and the king prayed earnestly that the pestilence might fall upon him and his house, and not upon his unoffending people. Thereafter the plague was so suddenly stayed that every one saw in it a miraculous answer to David's prayer. The prophet Gad, recognising that the spot was a holy one, since Jehovah had thus appeared on it, bade David at once go forth to the place where he had seen the angel, and build an altar and offer sacrifices on it. David went, and found the owner of the threshing-floor engaged in threshing wheat. He asked leave to buy the ground of him, together with the oxen for sacrifice and the threshing instruments to furnish fuel. The Jebusite offered all to the king as a present, but as the law of sacrifice required that one should not offer God what was not of one's own earning,^b David could not accept the gift,^c but paid as the price 50 shekels of silver [£6, 13s. 4d. of our money. The reading in Chronicles, 600 shekels of gold, or £1200 sterling, shows that there is some uncertainty in the texts]. David then hastily built an altar of earth,^d offered his sacrifice, and the plague was stayed.

60. CAUSES OF ABSALOM'S REBELLION: (1.) ON HIS OWN PART. The next event of public consequence in David's reign was the rebellion raised by his third son, Absalom. So far as the young prince is concerned the causes of this outbreak are not far to seek. He was a man of boundless ambition, and since the death of Amnon he

^a Or Ornan, in 1 Chron. xxxi. and 2 Chron. iii.

^b Sacrifice is a substitute for the self, and hence the symbol needed to be something closely connected with, or part of, the self.

^c V. 23 must be rendered "All this will the servant of my lord the king give unto the king." He did not really give it, because David could not accept it as a gift.

^d See Exod. xx. 24.

seems to have regarded himself, and been regarded by the people, as the heir to the throne. David's second son, Chileab, is never heard of in the history, and had perhaps died young. In respect of his personal appearance Absalom had the credit of being the handsomest man in the realm. In face and features, and bodily form, he was ideally perfect, and his vanity seems to have been about equal to his ambition. One feature of his beauty was luxuriant flowing hair, which he wore long, cutting it only once a year. Some idea of its length and luxuriance is gained from the fact that, when cut, the year's growth weighed 200 "royal shekels" ^a [nearly 7 lbs. Troy]. His children also seem to have been handsome, his daughter Tamar being especially praised. Examples of his daring we have already met, and also of his impatience of restraint.^b He could not bear the secluded private life to which David condemned him after his return from Geshur, even though he knew that his crime merited a much severer punishment. The glare of court life was absolutely necessary to his comfort. David seems to have taken no pains to curb his appetites or to teach him self-control, and now his ambition found it intolerable to wait for his father's death before seating himself on the throne.

61. (2.) ON THE PART OF THE PEOPLE. How it came about that Absalom's rebellious attempt found so much support in the country, and especially in Judah, David's own tribe, is not so easy to say. No causes of discontent with David's rule are mentioned, but there must have been some. If, as we have supposed, the census really meant a reducing of the people's liberties, and the establishment of a military despotism, then this would have been a very strong cause for discontent. The pestilence, too, had come immediately after, and every one, even David himself, had recognised in it a punish-

^a 2 Sam. xiv. 25-27.

^b See §§ 53, 54, 56.

ment for his criminal intention. The death of 70,000 men all over the land was thus laid, by common consent, at David's door, and if the people felt besides that an attempt had been made to curtail their rights, we can conceive that their minds had been embittered against David. The only indication of weakness or neglect of his royal duties recorded of David is in connection with the dispensing of justice. Ancient custom made it the king's duty to hear in person all appeal cases brought before him, and the labour involved in this must have been immense now that the kingdom was so large. To hear all cases within a reasonable time became almost impossible. David may therefore, in the weakness of age, perhaps with ill health in addition, have delayed or postponed such suits, and gathered ill-will to his government in consequence.

62. ABSALOM'S PREPARATIONS (2 Sam. xv. 1-6). After his restoration to court life, he set about the task of making himself a favourite of the people. He first of all tried to play on the vain love of pomp and show by the grandeur of his equipage. Laying aside the simple customs of the old days, when horses were used by Israelite kings only in war, he aped the style of Egyptian princes in getting up chariots drawn by horses for daily use, and when he rode out, fifty runners preceded his carriage, to make way for him. Again he would take his seat in the city gate, where justice was dispensed, and question minutely all suitors as they came up regarding their cases. After hearing what they had to say, he usually assured all alike that they were in the right, and lamented that the king had neither appeared himself to hear them, nor appointed any one else to do so. If need were, too, he could cloak over his vanity and ambition with a fair show of humility. Whenever passers-by approached to salute him, as one of the royal family, by prostrating themselves before him, he caught them by the hand, and for-

bidding the obeisance, kissed them cordially as if he were no higher in rank than they. By such arts of flattery, aided by his handsome person and lavish display, he managed to impose upon the more ignorant, who could not see the real man behind the mask, and by-and-by he became very popular. Men's minds were tempted with visions of a coming ruler better even than David.

63. THE INSURRECTION (2 Sam. xv. 7-12). When this had gone on for about four years,^a he felt strong enough to put his plans into execution. Pretending that while in Geshur he had vowed sacrifices to Jehovah at his birthplace Hebron, if he should ever get back to Jerusalem, he took leave of David and proceeded to Hebron. At the same time he sent his emissaries all over the country, telling them of his designs, and bidding them proclaim him king whenever the sound of the trumpet should be heard from place to place. He took with him from Jerusalem two hundred men, apparently from the middle or lower class, merely as guests invited to the sacrifice. They were not in any way accomplices in his conspiracy, though doubtless he knew that they were well disposed towards him. Whilst sacrificing he sent to the neighbouring^b village, Giloh, for a certain Ahithophel, renowned for his sagacity.^c He had been David's friend and adviser, but seems to have left the court, perhaps on account of some quarrel with David.^d During the sacrificial feast Absalom openly declared his intention; and was no doubt anointed king by the priest who had officiated. All present yielded easily and at once, and wherever the news spread, his emissaries pro-

^a "Forty years" in ver. 7, is clearly mis-copied for "four years."

^b Joshua xv. 51.

^c 2 Sam. xvi. 23.

^d He had a son Eliam, 2 Sam. xxiii. 34, and Bathsheba's father was named Eliam too, 2 Sam. xi. 3 (Ammiel, however, in 1 Chron. iii. 5). Hence some think he was Bathsheba's grandfather, and joined Absalom in revenge.

claimed him king, and great numbers joined his side, many flocking to his standard at Hebron.

64. DAVID LEAVES JERUSALEM (2 Sam. xv. 13-30). As soon as David heard of the rising, he resolved to leave Jerusalem : no doubt the importance of the affair would be much exaggerated in the reports that first reached him. The city was not prepared to stand a siege, and he wanted to prevent the indiscriminate massacre in the streets, which would have ensued if it had been taken after resistance. He, therefore, started at once, taking his whole household with him, except ten female slaves that were left to keep the house. All who were loyal were bidden follow him in his flight. Going out of the city by the east side, towards the ravine called Kidron, and the Mount of Olives, he halted at "the far-off house"^a in the ravine, and reviewed his followers as they marched past. All his ministers and chief officials clung loyally to him ; also the whole of his trained body-guard, the Cherethites and Pelethites,^b the six hundred "mighty men," and a certain Ittai who had recently joined his service with a number of men from Gath. He had thus practically the whole of the only standing army in the country, and his men, though few, would be well-armed and well-trained. When he saw Ittai and his men, the king bade them return, as they were but exiles, and could have as yet but little attachment to David's person, while they had more hope of preferment with the new king. The valiant Philistine, however, determined to live and die with his master, and he proved of much service in the battle that followed. Even the priests Zadok and Abiathar came forth bearing the ark of the covenant, as usual in war, and stationed themselves beside David till all had passed by.^c The king then bade

^a Verse 17, Hebrew.

^b See section 84.

^c Verse 24, read "and Abiathar stood still" for "went up." Compare Josh. iii. 17.

the priests carry back the ark to the city. If it were God's will, he would return and worship before it again, but if not, he would still humbly submit. Moreover, they might be of more use to him in Jerusalem, by reporting to him, through their sons Ahimaaz and Jonathan, the movements and plans of the enemy. This they readily promised to do. David then followed the procession up the Mount of Olives, going barefoot and with his face covered in token of grief. On seeing this, the people, too, showed their sympathy for him by adopting the same signs of mourning, and by loud lamentations.

65. HUSHAI SENT BACK (2 Sam. xv. 31-37). As the south was in Absalom's power, David chose the path northwards, intending to go towards the plain of Jordan, and he had agreed to remain there till Zadok and Abiathar should send him word what to do next. One of the most disheartening pieces of news that had yet come was the defection of Ahithophel, whose advice was supposed to be nearly as infallible as the oracle. On hearing of it, David, with a play upon his name, which means "brother of folly," prayed that God might turn his counsel into folly on this occasion. On coming to the top of the Mount, however, "where God is worshipped"^a he was cheered by meeting his long-tried friend and adviser, Hushai, the Archite (*i.e.*, the man of Erach, in Ephraim), coming to him in the garb of a mourner. As he was no warrior, David begged him to return and feign allegiance to Absalom, that he might be able to defeat the counsels of Ahithophel. Hushai accordingly returned, and reached Jerusalem just as Absalom was entering it from the other side.

66. ZIBA'S FALSEHOOD (2 Sam. xvi. 1-4). In going down the other side of the ridge of Scopus, David was met by Ziba, the steward of Mephibosheth, coming from his master's estates in Benjamin. He brought a present very welcome at this

^a Verse 32, Hebrew.

time, a couple of asses ready saddled for any members of the royal household to ride on, two hundred loaves of bread, two hundred bunches of raisins and other dried fruits, and a skin of wine. David inquired why Mephibosheth himself had not come with his king, and Ziba replied, quite falsely as it turned out, that he had stayed in Jerusalem, expecting that the present troubles would end in the throne being restored to the house of Saul, of which he was the only survivor. On this the king, somewhat hastily treating his estates as confiscated by his siding with the rebels, expressed his thanks to Ziba for his timely gift, by handing over to him as his own all the lands and property of Mephibosheth his master.

67. INSULTING BEHAVIOUR OF SHIMEI BEN GERA (2 Sam. xvi. 5-14). When the cavalcade reached the little town of Bahurim, a man named Shimei, a distant relative of Saul's, came out and threw stones at them, and loudly cursed David for his cruelty to the house of Saul. He seems to have referred to the death of the seven men handed over to the Gibeonites at the time of the famine, for we know of no others of Saul's house who had fallen by David's hand. Abishai begged leave to rid the king and his company of these annoying insults by putting the man to death. But David recognised that his duty at present was humble submission. God intended him to bear this infliction, he was sure, not impatiently to throw it off. In this sense the man's cursing was from God. And, said he, if my own son is seeking my life, how much less to blame is this Benjamite, whom family grievances have turned against me? This submissive bearing of the trouble would perhaps repay itself. And so the wretch was allowed to vent his wrath as he listed. Before the day closed David had reached the sparsely tilled and peopled tract near Jordan, and be-

ing then safe for the time, they pitched their camp and rested.^a

68. **ABSALOM IN JERUSALEM** (2 Sam. xvi. 15—xvii. 14). Meanwhile Absalom and the rebels had reached Jerusalem, and taken possession of it. Hushai was one of the first to greet him with cries of "Long live the king!" Absalom at first doubted his sincerity, and asked him why he had left his friend so soon. But the courtier could feign friendship well, and besides, Absalom's vanity and the success he had already achieved would lead him to believe in all promises of help quite readily. He therefore yielded to the apparent sincerity of Hushai's promises. On Absalom asking his advisers what it was best to do, Ahithophel told him that the first necessity was to assure the people that there was an irreconcilable break between him and his father, and not a mere pettish quarrel soon to be healed again, in which his supporters would throw their lives away, and the prince be safe. This he could do by taking the ten slaves left in the palace and making them part of his own harem. Ahithophel next offered to pursue David that very night with 12,000 of the best troops that had as yet joined the rising. He would thus surprise the king while his men were still few and weary with their march. And if once the king were slain, no more fighting would be needed. He would bring all the people to Absalom, "as a bride returneth home to her husband."^b This advice was generally approved in the council of war, but when Hushai was called in, he recommended delay. David and his men were veterans in war, trained to it by long practice, and just now full of the courage and strength of violent wrath. Besides, it was a well-known rule that the king should not go to battle with the army, and hence his

^a The name of the place where they rested is either left out by some copyist, or is Ayephim, the word rendered "weary" in verse 14, "and they came to Ayephim."

^b Added to verse 3 in LXX.

men would have concealed him in some pit or cave. They would have to fight that trained body-guard before coming near the king, and if a slight reverse should occur, then the whole party would lose heart. His advice was, Increase the army to the utmost : make victory absolutely certain. Come down upon David with overwhelming numbers, in millions like the dew-drops on the grass. And if he should get into a fortified city, then they would besiege it and destroy it as completely as if they were to drag it into the river. This advice pleased Absalom best after all. It gave the foolish youth the prospect of acting the king undisturbed for a few days more. He did not reflect that his success was solely due to the intoxication of the moment, and that when men came to their sober senses, their love for the old and tried king would return.

69. AHITHOPHEL'S SUICIDE (2 Sam. xvii. 23). When Hushai's advice was adopted, Ahithophel had sense enough to foresee that the cause of Absalom was doomed. Accordingly, in bitter disappointment, he at once rode back to Giloh, and after making his will, and disposing of his property, hanged himself.

70. DAVID CROSSES THE JORDAN (2 Sam. xvii. 23.) Immediately after giving his advice, and before he knew whether his plan or Ahithophel's would carry, Hushai sent word to the priests what the two plans were, and bade them send Ahimaaz and Jonathan to David with instructions to cross the Jordan immediately, lest the plan of a sudden surprise should, after all, be attempted. The two young priests had remained all day in concealment at the Fuller's Well (En-rogel) outside the city, and a woman now conveyed to them Hushai's orders. They at once started for the Jordan, but in spite of all precautions, they were seen and pursued by Absalom's men. On reaching Bahurim a woman hid them in a dry well in the inner court of her house, covered over the well, and spread out corn to dry

above the lid. When the pursuers came to her nothing suspicious was seen, and her story that they had gone over the brook, though quite a false scent, was readily believed. The youths reached David's camp in safety, and reported as ordered. On hearing their news, David crossed the fords of Jordan that same night, and came to Mahanaim, a fortified city. Here he was most liberally supplied with beds, cooking utensils, and all kinds of provisions by three wealthy men of the neighbourhood, Shobi of Rabbath Ammon (apparently a brother of the Ammonite king), Machir^a of Lo-debar, and Barzillai of Rogelim.^b

71. ABSALOM'S DEFEAT AND DEATH (2 Sam. xviii. 1-18.) Absalom seems to have held his court for a few days more in Jerusalem, and then to have crossed the Jordan to attack his father. He appointed Amasa,^c son of an Ishmaelite, Ithra, by a sister of David, his general-in-chief. Whether Absalom had besieged Mahanaim, as some think likely, is not known. In the interval all who were yet loyal joined David at Mahanaim, and soon he had a considerable force. The decisive battle was fought not far from Mahanaim, in a forest or jungle called "the wood of Ephraim." David's men seem to have been the attacking party, for he divided them into three parts, commanded by Joab, Abishai, and Ittai, who were, no doubt, to come upon the enemy from three different points. David proposed to go to battle in person, but the people adhered to the rule long ago laid down,^d and refused to allow him. As the troops marched out, he stood at the city gate and reviewed them, and to each division he expressed his wish that Absalom's life might be spared, if possible. The rebels seem to have been

^a See § 45.

^b Psalms iii. and iv., composed at this time, show us the perfect trust in God with which David met his present troubles.

^c 1 Chron. ii. 17.

^d See § 38.

surprised, and compelled to fight in a very disadvantageous position, and they were soon routed with great slaughter. Owing to the nature of the ground, as many were lost in the bogs and thickets as in the actual fight. The killed were estimated at 20,000 men. Absalom himself fled in terror, riding through the forest on a mule, but as he passed beneath a large terebinth-tree, he got entangled in the branches by his long hair, his mule ran out beneath him, and he was left hanging in the tree. One of David's men saw him in this state, but forbore to touch him on account of the king's command, and merely went to inform Joab, the commander-in-chief. This ruthless soldier felt no scruple in disregarding the king's orders. He saw that Absalom's death was the only thing that could bring these troubles to an end, and after scolding the soldier for being so conscientious, he went to the spot, and slew the pretender by casting three darts at him. His armour-bearers then took the dead body, cast it into a deep pit, and covered the pit with a great heap of stones — a mode of shewing extreme abhorrence of the disgraced dead.^a Thus ended the career of this ambitious prince. He seems to have lost his three sons before this, and to have reared for himself a mausoleum in the "King's Dale,"^b to perpetuate his name — a bit of vanity quite of a piece with his other follies. An evil name it is better to let perish.

72. DAVID'S GRIEF FOR ABSALOM (2 Sam. xviii. 19-33; xix. 1-8.) After Absalom was slain, Joab, by the trumpet, gave the signal to stop pursuit. He was willing enough to spare the rebels now that their chief was dead. Ahimaaz then asked leave to run to Mahanaim with the news of victory. The bearer of good news was always highly rewarded, but the bringer of ill news as much disliked, and since Absalom's death would be very ill news to David, Joab refused to give Ahimaaz, the

^a See Josh. vii. 26.

^b Site unknown.

high priest's son, such a thankless task. He turned to an Ethiopian slave of his own,^a and bade him go with the tidings. After he had started Ahimaaz again pressed for leave to go also, notwithstanding the evil nature of the tidings, and Joab at last allowed him. Adopting a peculiar style of running,^b he was able to overtake the Ethiopian, and got first to Mahanaim, where David was waiting most anxiously for news. When Ahimaaz came in sight, the watchman reported a man running alone. David at once concluded that this would be a messenger with tidings. Had it been soldiers fleeing because defeated, there would have been more than one. By-and-bye the Ethiopian too was seen, and the watchman could report that the first man looked like Ahimaaz, the chief priest's son, which raised the king's hopes of good tidings. The young priest soon arrived, and told the king that the battle had ended in a complete victory for his troops. He immediately asked if Absalom were safe, but Ahimaaz, to prepare the king by gentle stages, for the news of his death, pretended ignorance on that point. On the Ethiopian's arrival he was questioned in the same way, and replied in courtly phrase that the king's son had met the fate of a rebel against the king. David at once refused to hear more of the victory. He went up to the solitude of the little room over the gate, and, in the deepest grief, wept and lamented for Absalom, wishing only that he had himself died in his room. The victorious king was quite lost in the bereaved father. This inconsolable grief soon became known to the army, and the victors stole back into the town silently and in small groups, as if they had been the vanquished. There were no choirs of women with music and dancing to meet them this time. Joab, however, soon mustered courage enough to go and

^a For "Cushi" read always "the Cushite."

^b In verse 23 read "ran in the style of the plain" for "by the way of the plain."

tell the king, in his own rough way, the mischief that his grief for Absalom was working. It was as much as saying publicly that he would rather have lost all his faithful soldiers than this one faithless son. His men had risked their lives for his life and throne, and now he seemed more disappointed at it than pleased. If he did not arise and receive the army in a friendly and grateful way, they would soon all leave him. The advice thus roughly given was good and necessary, and the king saw that. He came forth and sat in the gate, whilst the army again marched past, and the feeble semblance of a triumphal reception was given them.

73. DAVID BROUGHT BACK TO JERUSALEM (2 Sam. xix. 9-40). The nation soon began to remember the benefits that the aged hero-king had conferred upon it, and to be ashamed of its foolish favour for the worthless Absalom. The northern tribes first sent a deputation to invite David back to his throne.^a The tribe of Judah alone stood sullenly apart, under Amasa, the commander-in-chief chosen by Absalom. David resolved, however, to try conciliation with them before resorting to harsher measures. He sent Zadok and Abiathar, the priests, to remind the elders of Judah that he was their fellow-tribesman, and when the rest of Israel were willing, why should they be the last to bring back their king? To Amasa he sent word that as he was his nephew, not only would he be pardoned for his share in the rising, but would be made permanent commander-in-chief in Joab's stead. Joab had so offended the king by his disobedience in regard to Absalom, that David felt bound to displace him from power. These measures had the desired effect. The men of Judah sent to ask the king back to Jerusalem, and arranged to meet him themselves at Gilgal, where he would cross the Jordan. When

^a To ver. 10 add with LXX., "and the speech of all Israel came unto the king."

the king reached Gilgal it was found that proper arrangements had not been made for warning the northern tribes at what time they would meet him. Hence none of these tribes was represented save Benjamin, from which Shimei had come down with one thousand fellow-tribesmen to entreat pardon for his insulting treatment of the king. Ziba, the servant of Mephibosheth, too, had come down with all his household. When Shimei confessed his guilt and asked pardon, Abishai urged that surely his crime had merited death, but David at once pardoned him, saying that the day was far too joyous for any one to be put to death. Mephibosheth also came to Gilgal, having borne all the signs of the deepest mourning ever since David had left Jerusalem. He explained that Ziba had deceived him and slandered him to the king. He had intended to go out with the king, and had bidden his servant saddle an ass for him, but Ziba had never done it, and when Absalom had once entered the city escape became impossible. He had always felt grateful to the king for sparing his life: no thought of disloyalty had ever passed through his mind. The king believed his story, but Ziba had made himself so useful that he hardly liked to revoke entirely the gift already made to him. He cut the matter short by dividing the estate between him and Mephibosheth. Barzillai the Gileadite, who had so liberally supplied David's wants at Mahanaim, convoyed the king as far as Jordan, and, to show his gratitude, David offered him a place at Court as a royal pensioner. The old man, already in his eightieth year, felt, however, that palace life could have no delights for him, but asked the king to take Chimham, his son, instead, which he did.

74. SHEBA BEN BICHRI'S REBELLION (2 Sam. xix. 41, —xx.). When the northern tribes found that Judah had fetched the king home without giving them notice, they were highly enraged.

They seem to have thought that Judah would be certain to receive special honours and privileges from the king for this apparent zeal in his service. The men of Judah answered that their claim upon the king rested merely on his kinship with them ; that they desired no special privileges. The northerners replied that they had ten parts in David for Judah's two, and, moreover, they had the birthright,^a and that they considered a slight had been put upon them by being left out in this way. When the quarrel grew fierce, an ambitious Benjamite named Sheba ben Bichri, who was present, saw his own opportunity in it, blew a trumpet, and proposed that the revolt should continue. Some other king would be found if the men of Judah claimed the son of Jesse as their exclusive property. The state of men's minds was such that he at first found a large following among the northern tribes, who were always jealous of Judah.

75. DEATH OF AMASA (2 Sam. xx. 4-10). On hearing of this new revolt David bade Amasa, the new general, assemble the levies of Judah within three days, and get ready to put it down. Amasa had not, however, the skill and practice of Joab in such matters, and he was detained beyond the set time. David, therefore, became impatient, and sent off Joab^b and the body-guard at once to meet the rebels. They met Amasa at Gibeon, now returning to Jerusalem with the levies he had assembled. With the utmost apparent cordiality Joab approached to salute Amasa, who was his cousin, and took hold of his beard to give him the kiss. This gesture released a sword concealed in his dress, and he immediately snatched it up and thrust it into the body of Amasa, who fell dead on the spot. Thus again, as in the case of Abner, Joab did not scruple

^a Ver. 43, for "we have also more right in David than ye," read, with LXX., "and we are also the first-born rather than ye," and see 1 Chron. v. 1.

^b So read for Abishai, ver. 6.

for a moment to rid himself of a rival by assassination. And again, so indispensable was Joab, that David had simply to overlook his crime.

76. THE REVOLT QUELLED (2 Sam. xx. 10-22.) After the murder of Amasa, Joab and the veterans held on their way to meet Sheba. One of them, however, remained by the corpse of Amasa, and kept crying, as his men came up, "Whosoever favoureth Joab, and he that is for David, let him go after Joab." At first the men gathered round the corpse of their murdered commander; but, after the body was drawn aside into the field, and covered with a cloth, all followed Joab.

Sheba and his party were now hotly pursued, and seem never to have been able to make a stand before Joab. They were chased northwards until they took refuge in the ancient fortified city of Abel in Beth-Maachah,^a which is in the extreme north, near Dan. Here Sheba found little support; all the young men of the neighbourhood rising and joining David's levies, and laying siege to Abel. The besiegers raised a mound of earth round the city wall,^b and from this mound were battering it down. Then one of the inhabitants, a woman noted for her wisdom, came to the wall and called for Joab, and when he came, reproached him for trying to overthrow a loyal city—a city that had always been renowned for its close adherence to the old customs^c and laws of Israel. Joab replied that he had no such desire; that he was simply pursuing the rebel Sheba, and that, if he were delivered up, he would at once leave. The woman then went to the elders of the city, and was able to persuade them to behead Sheba, and throw his head over the wall to Joab. This brought the war to an

^a So read verse 14.

^b Verse 15. Instead of "in the trench," read "close by the outer wall."

^c Verses 18, 19, should read: "in old time, saying, Let them ask in Abel and in Dan whether that had ever come to an end which the faithful in Israel had established. Thou seekest to destroy the city," &c.

end : for those who had followed Sheba had by this time all dropped away. So Joab withdrew his army, and returned to Jerusalem.

QUESTIONS AND POINTS FOR ENQUIRY.

How do the Gibeonites intervene in the history of Joshua, Saul, and David?

What were the great public calamities in David's reign?

What was the census? Why was it wrong?

Deduce the moral lessons of Absalom's career.

What were the circumstances of his recall?

Sketch the relations between Ahithophel and David, and between Hushai and David.

In what connection does Barzillai appear?

What offence was given to the North in connection with David's return?

What were the burial customs of these days?

When was harvest time?

Ascertain who the Hittites were.

CHAPTER VII.

CLOSE OF LIFE.

77. PREPARATIONS FOR THE TEMPLE (1 Chron. xxii., xxviii., xxix.) The rest of David's life seems to have been spent in quiet and prosperity. We hear nothing of any more wars; and in civil matters, his chief occupation seems to have been preparing for the erection of the Temple. He collected great hoards of all the materials needed—cedar trees, stone, gold, silver, bronze, pearls, &c. He could not himself begin the work,—the prophetic voice had forbidden that; but he carried the preparations to such an advanced state, that Solomon began it, almost

as soon as he was seated on the throne. Nor did he spare his private wealth, for he thought that that was well spent which was spent in the service of religion. His liberality in this cause stirred up the wealthy Israelites also throughout the land, and large contributions of silver and gold were sent up to Jerusalem to help the work.

78. OLD AGE (1 Kings i. 1-4.) The hardships and exertions of his early years made David prematurely old. Before he was seventy his infirmities had so grown upon him, and he was so exhausted, that they could not keep him warm. Then they made Abishag of Shunem, in Galilee, his nurse and companion.

79. HIS LAST WORDS (2 Sam. xxiii. 1-7.) Nevertheless, his old poetic inspiration flashed out at intervals still, and if his early compositions show fire and spirited determination, his "last words" show the deep thought and mellow wisdom of age, as well as the calm trust in God, which comes from long experience of Him. Looking back on his own life as he remembered it, and forward to the future as he could see it by the light of Nathan's prophecy, he sang :—

Thus saith David the son of Jesse,
 Thus saith the man that was raised on high,
 The anointed of the God of Jacob,
 And sweet in the songs of Israel.
 The Spirit of Jehovah spake by me,
 And His word was on my tongue.
 The God of Israel said,
 The Rock of Israel spoke to me—
 A ruler over men—a just one—
 Ruling in the fear of God—
 It is like the light of the morn, when the sun riseth with-
 out clouds.
 From clear shining—^bfrom rain—grass springs from the
 earth.

^b Or perhaps, "*After clear shining—after rain—grass springs from the earth.*"—E.V.

For is not my house thus with God?

^aFor He hath made for me an everlasting covenant,
Ordered in all points, and well kept :

^bFor He is all my salvation, and all my desire,
And will He not make it to flourish?

But the men of Belial are like thorns all of them thrust
aside :

For they cannot be taken with the hand.

And if a man will touch them

He is supplied with iron, and the wood, and the spear,
And in the fire are they consumed.

The blessedness of just government, and the essential misery of weakness, have never been more picturesquely described. The poem shows, too, with what simple and complete faith he had grasped the assurance of Nathan that his house should be established with God for ever. This promise of God's was all his desire ; and he lived upon it. It was the shape in which he saw the Messiah, and the sight saved him.

80. ADONIJAH'S REBELLION (1 Kings i. 5-10.)

As yet David had made no public announcement of who his successor should be ; but after the death of Absalom, his fourth son, Adonijah (whose mother's name was Haggith), had been generally considered the heir. David, indeed, had intended that Solomon should succeed, and had given a solemn promise to this effect to Bathsheba. But this, though known in the court, had not been made public. Adonijah seems to have resembled Absalom in ambition and in vanity as well as in personal beauty ; and his father had been foolishly indulgent to him as he had been before to his elder brother. Without doubt, David had seen clearly enough that the only son of his who had the making of a king in him was Solomon. However, Adonijah, in the first place, set up a royal equipage

a Others make it, "*For is not my house thus with God that He hath made for me an everlasting covenant.*"—ED.

b Or it may be, "*For as to all my salvation and all (His) good pleasure,—yea will He not make it to flourish ?*"—ED.

of horse-chariots with fifty runners. Then he sounded Joab, the general of the army, and Abiathar, the priest, and found them willing to support his claims. They appear to have thought that his birth gave him an absolute right to reign, and that, as David was now weak and bedrid, and therefore unable to attend to affairs of state, it was necessary to have the young king installed at once. Adonijah accordingly invited these conspirators, along with all his own brothers, save Solomon, to a banquet at En-Rogel (the fuller's well), on the south of the city ; and there they proclaimed him king.

81. SOLOMON ANOINTED (1 Kings i. 11-53). Nathan, Solomon's tutor, was the first to hear of this meeting ; and trembling for the life of his pupil, he sent Bathsheba to remind David of his promise, and to inform him of Adonijah's doings. He himself followed close behind her, coming in to David with the same tale, as if he had not known of Bathsheba's errand. The old king at once swore by "Him that redeemed him from all distress," that Solomon should be enthroned that very day. He sent Nathan and Zadok with the body-guard to Gihon, on the north side of the city ; there they anointed Solomon king with all the recognised forms, and, bringing him back, seated him on his father's throne. The conspirators dispersed in the greatest fear whenever they heard of this, and Adonijah sought sanctuary beside the altar : they did not feel strong enough even to strike a single blow.

82. DEATH OF DAVID (1 Kings ii. 1-11). It seems that not long after this David felt his end approaching, and sent for Solomon to receive his dying charge. After bidding him follow Jehovah, and keep His law as the only safeguard of his throne, he specially laid upon him the duty of executing justice on Joab for the murder of Abner and of Amasa, and on Shimei for his insulting behaviour at the time of Absalom's rebellion. He himself had

pardoned these men; but in these olden times all pardons given and all treaties made by a king expired at his death. It was therefore in Solomon's power to continue the pardon or revoke it as he pleased. The king, on the other hand, commended to his care the family of Barzillai of Gilead, whose hospitality had been so welcome to him at Mahanaim.

And now his long reign of forty years was over. He died at the age of seventy,—“he slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David.”

83.[THE CHARACTER OF DAVID. In many-sided character and wealth of mind David surpasses all the heroes of the Old Testament. He is at once the man of meditation and the man of action, the man of rapt, poetic inspiration, and the man of affairs. His contemplative disposition made him at home with solitude and simplicity. His martial spirit, fertility of resource, energy and courage fitted him for the post of danger and the burden of rule in the most anxious and agitated times. He had the keenest eye for the beauties of nature, the rarest gift of song and music, the priceless possession of a personal attractiveness which ever won confidence and inspired enthusiasm. The qualities of his character were all of the strongest, whether for good or for evil. His quick, susceptible, emotional nature led him, at times, into questionable positions and even into grievous offences. But his value for God's law, his spiritual insight, and his sense of the eternally true lay deeper than any passion in his soul, and made it impossible for him not to feel the horror of wrong or not to cry for deliverance from it. There are dark stains upon his honour. We are staggered by instances of deceitfulness, hateful self-indulgence, weak parental fondness, pitiless cruelty. In many respects he was the child of his age, and the age was rough, ruthless, and changeful. But in him the finer qualities overbore all. On

many occasions we see memorable illustrations of the tenderness of his affections, the purity of his aims, his filial dutifulness, his sense of justice, his respect for public right, his wisdom, his chivalry, his patriotism, his consideration for others, his magnanimity to enemies, his fidelity to friends. Above all, the strength of his character was his piety. That piety was altogether practical and real. It was a joy in God in times of good ; a quenchless thirst for God in times of declension, never failing to bring him back in contrition ; a chastened submissiveness to God in times of trouble ; and at all times a clear trust in God, which grew in power and beauty as years and experience grew on him. But, indeed, David's character is so extraordinarily rich and varied that historians and poets alike have tried in vain to describe it worthily.—EDITOR.]

QUESTIONS AND POINTS FOR ENQUIRY.

What hastened the anointment of Solomon as king ?

What was peculiar about the obligation of treaties in these days ?

Cite events in David's history illustrating the various features in David's character which are mentioned in section 83.

A P P E N D I X.

DAVID'S CIVIL AND MILITARY ORGANIZATION.

84 THE ARMY. Like all ancient nations, the real army of Israel was the *nation*; all able-bodied males were bound to answer the levy. But in David's time there came into being the beginnings of a standing army. The six hundred veterans who had gathered round David in his freebooting days had chosen warfare for their profession, and the band remained permanently in arms as the nucleus of the army. In the rebellions of Absalom they are mentioned as the "Gibborim,^a six hundred men which came after him from Gath," and whose loyalty probably saved David. The word Gibborim is usually translated "heroes," "veterans," "mighty men," and wherever "mighty men" occurs, we are to understand this band. The "Thirty" of 2 Sam. xxiii. 23 were most likely at first officers of the six hundred. But since they were chosen to this position for their skill in warfare, they were also, doubtless, officers in the general army when it was called out. Their names are given, 2 Sam. xxiii. 24-39. Above them were "The Three," the most renowned of David's warriors, and supreme leaders of the army under Joab; and these three were Jashobeam, son of Hachmoni,^b who had slain three hundred men

^a So read for Gittites, 2 Sam. xv. 18.

^b So read in 2 Sam. xxiii. 8, for "The Tachmonite that sat in 'he seat," 1 Chron. xi. 11.

in one battle ; Eleazar, son of Dodo ; and Shammah, son of Agee. The chief of the thirty officers was Abishai, the brother of Joab.

In addition to the Gibborim David had a regiment closely corresponding to a modern "body-guard," or to the life-guards. They were either exclusively or for the most part foreigners, as is implied by their name, Cherethites and Pelethites, or strictly, Krêthi and Plêthi.^a From the similarity of these words to Cretans and Philistines, it has been thought that these life-guards must have been recruited chiefly from these nations ; but that is, of course, not certain. Others explain the names as simply executioners and runners.

Shortly before Absalom's rebellion David had also organised another small troop of foreign mercenaries from Gath, under an adventurer named Ittai, who showed very great attachment to him, and had led one of the three divisions of the army at the Battle of the Wood of Ephraim.

Whenever a war broke out requiring more men than these small bands, the trumpet was blown, and all the able-bodied men were summoned to a rendezvous, and embodied in an army *en masse*, or a choice was made of the best and strongest.

1 Chron. xxvii. 1-24 mentions an arrangement whereby the fighting strength of the country was estimated. The 288,000 were divided into twelve divisions of 24,000 each, and placed under twelve commanders taken from the officers referred to above : each division in turn served for one month at a time. The absence of any mention of these divisions in connection with the rebellion either of Absalom or of Adonijah, or, indeed, in any of the other wars, has led some to suppose that this was only a plan proposed, but never really carried into effect. We venture to suggest that it was part of the plan implied in the census, which was departed

^a In 1 Sam. xxx. 14 the Cherethites are Philistines.

from when the pestilence came. And this view is favoured by the concluding verses of the section, verses 23, 24, which are obscure, but certainly refer to the census.

85. **DAVID'S SOURCES OF REVENUE** (1 Chron. xxvii. 25-31). There has been preserved to us a record of the names of David's fiscal officers; and from these we can see that his whole possessions fell under twelve general heads, viz. :—

(1.) Treasures in money and precious metals at Jerusalem.

(2.) Stores in the country, and in the other cities and fortresses, perhaps the produce of the royal estates.

(3.) Tillage of the royal estates.

(4.) Vineyards.

(5.) Wine Stores.

(6.) Olive and fig plantations in the maritime plain south of Mount Carmel.

(7.) Stores of oil.

(8.) Herds in Sharon.

(9.) Herds in other places.

(10.) Herds of camels.

(11.) Herds of asses.

(12.) Flocks of sheep.

The people of Israel seem to have assigned to the king certain lands, or, at any rate, rights of tillage and pasturage on certain lands. From the produce of these, the royal state was maintained. Taxes or tribute would be very light, if there were any at all; but, of course, the subject kings of the surrounding tribes paid tribute, or (as it is phrased) "brought gifts." David's sources of revenue, therefore, were the tribute of the foreigners, and the produce of his own flocks and royal estates.*

86. **DAVID'S CIVIL OFFICERS.** Lists are

* The kindly treatment of foreigners is proved by the fact that among these fiscal officers two are foreigners, the Ishmaelite who was over the camels, and the Hagarite who was over the sheep.

given in 2 Sam. viii. 16-18, xx. 23-26; 1 Chron. xviii. 15-17, xxvii. 32-34. They were (1.) The chief priests, Zadok and Abiathar (2 Sam. viii. 17, read "Abiathar the son of Ahimelech" for "Ahimelech son of Abiathar"), throughout the whole of David's reign. (2.) The Recorder, Jehoshaphat, the son of Ahilud, whose business seems to have been the chronicling of the events of the reign, like the modern Cancellarius or Chancellor. (3.) The Scribe, Seraiah or Shavsha, *i.e.*, the king's writer, or amanuensis, to note down his orders and decisions for transmission to the proper persons. The most puzzling case is (4.) "The Chief Ruler," a position filled by David's sons (2 Sam. viii. 18), and by Ira, from the district of Jair in Gilead (2 Sam. xx. 26). The Hebrew word here used is the same as that which is elsewhere translated "priest." In 2 Sam. xx. 25, 26, the words should read "and Zadok and Abiathar were the priests, and Ira, the Jairite, was also a priest to David." The close connection here suggests that Ira was a priest in much the same sense as Zadok, a house-priest therefore, or royal chaplain. It would be his business to conduct religious services in the palace, and also to give advice to the king, in much the same way as was the case with Constantine's Bishop. The only difficulty on this view is that David's own sons had this title according to 2 Sam. viii. 18, although they were not of Aaronic descent. So, too, Zabud, the son of Nathan, was "priest" to Solomon in this sense; and he cannot have been descended from Aaron. Perhaps, however, the title was only a title of honour, without implying sacrificial functions. (5.) "The King's Friend," Hushai, the Archite. This dignity carried with it the duties of giving advice in all matters of state, and would correspond very nearly to the modern Cabinet Minister or Privy Councillor.

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